

# THE TELEGRAPH WIRE

COMICS  
& CONIX

ISSUE 15

FREE!



Featuring an interview with PACIFIC'S David Scroggy!



This is FIT TO BE TIED, with a form-fitting CUTEY BUNNY logo courtesy of Joshua Quagmire--thanks J.Q. More of ye editor's wired words from the edge--or close to it, yes indeed...

Longtime TELEGRAPH WIRE readers will recall that, a little over a year ago, I brought up the censorship issue in this column, citing the relaxation of the Comics Code and the advent of non-Code four-colour direct-sales comics as reasons for concern. At the time, I was then inclined to agree that a ratings system, similar to the one employed by the movie industry, might be the beginning of a way out of this thorny problem.

The problem has since manifested itself in several ways. There have been a number of articles, both in the fan press and without, which have tackled the issue or at least alluded to it. Outside the fan press, reactions to today's comics have been almost wholeheartedly negative, as exemplified most recently in Benjamin DeMott's article for the February issue of *Psychology Today*, chillingly entitled "Darkness at the Mall." Then there was the Concerned Mom who stormed into the Comics & Comix shop in Palo Alto carrying a copy of TWISTED TALES, torn into several pieces, and demanding of the astonished clerks why it was that her young son had been sold "this trash!"

Understand: censorship per se is not the issue. The right to free speech is written into the U.S. Constitution and every red-blooded American guy and gal supports that First Amendment--don't they? The problem arises at a more practical level--that of the retailer--though it could easily rebound through all levels of the industry. Citing localized censorship laws, publishers by and large have been content to dump the problem squarely at the feet of the retailer, insisting that he be the one to decide whether or not to sell a certain title to minors. Both Pacific and Fantagraphics have chosen to label certain of their titles as "Recommended for Mature Readers," but the question of maturity nonetheless remains with the retailer.

Now, first of all, though the responsibility for selling a product lies with the retailer, it is the publisher who is accountable for that product's contents. The retailer generally does not have the time or resources to carefully examine every

publication before putting it out for sale. And even if he did, this would have to take place at the time of ordering--and not upon actual receipt of the product--since "adults only" books tend to sell fewer numbers than those that are "for all" and would need to be ordered accordingly. Secondly, what right does a retailer have to assume the arbitrary role of censor for his clientele? The retailer who does not make these choices, however, risks getting closed down by the local vice squad (spurred on, no doubt, by those Militant Moral Majority Mothers for whom, one assumes, the First Amendment means nothing in the face of little Johnny's possible corruption by those "filthy" comic books). If enough retailers were to be closed down, the ramifications of the censorship issue would indeed be clearly felt at all levels of the comics industry.

I still don't have any more answers to this problem than I had a year ago. For reasons too complicated to go into (see *The Comics Journal* #88 for several enlightening views on the subject), I have since come to realize the deficiencies and logistic complexities of instituting a ratings system for comics. Though possibly idealistic, what I propose instead is that we take an example from the book-selling business. Rather than indicating sections that are only for adults, bookstores assume that their primary product is for adults and relegate the children's books to their own juvenile section. Inasmuch as there could be problems connected with this approach, it seems to me that an industry as concerned as ours is with making comics an acceptable (and accepted) medium for adults should take that hypothesis as a given--should, in other words, take it for granted that our product is adult-oriented. And those comics (and there are many!) that don't even begin to approach the adult category should be slotted into newly-formed and clearly-designated Children's Sections in all comics specialty shops. This may not entirely solve the problem, but at least our orientation would be a little more consistent. Our industry is no disgrace. Isn't it time we started being a little more proud and a little less defensive?

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THE TELEGRAPH WIRE #15, June/July 1984. Published bimonthly by Comics and Comix, Inc., 2461 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94704. Copyright (C) 1984 individual contributors. All rights reserved. Subscriptions: \$4/six issues. Publisher: John Barrett. Editor: Diana Schutz. Banker: Tom Walton. Cover Logo: Tom Orzechowski. Cover Illustration: Rick Geary, colour courtesy of Tom Luth and Pacific Comics. Printed at Western Offset in San Diego, with thanks to Anne Etheridge. All information contained herein is accurate to the best of our knowledge, except where satire is intended. This issue is for Sharkey...he's Mr. Heartbreak!  
\*\*\*\*\*

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# FICESTARIC EVOLUTIONS

by JOHN BARRETT  
PUBLISHER

After years of absenting myself, I'm finally returning to the San Diego Comic Con. A normal work week for me is approximately 70 hours (combined commute and salt mines). I have a wife and three young children who often refer to me as "stranger". My two oldest sons' birthdays fall on July 26th and August 1st. Combine these facts with the usual dates of the San Diego Con (i.e. end of July, beginning of August) and perhaps you'll understand why it's been seven years since I have attended the acknowledged top dog of conventions. Now, thanks to the intervention of the U.S. Olympic Committee, I can return!

Convention, in the general business world, means "trade show" and connotes something slick, high tech, and professional. Comic conventions traditionally have been no more than glorified swap meets. San Diego is now approaching trade show status. This year becomes especially important in that, in an effort to improve the co-operation between the various elements of the comics industry and to thereby ensure its survival as a whole, a two-day supplemental pre-con "trade show" is available to the businesspeople only. The thrust of this conclave will be to unveil upcoming material, to make both publishers and retailers familiar with the various distributors, and to provide tips to store-owners on how to run better stores.

The fanatic demands of our unique business have, over the years, created a fiercely competitive stance amongst the members of the retail community. Unfortunately there has been little or no co-operation among these individuals as a result. Most of the comic store owners in the country entered the business as an extension of their hobby. I did.

Generally they lack any formal business training. Those who have survived have done so through a combination of luck, hard work, and/or lack of competition. Unsound business practices proliferate in our industry and, when they outweigh the survival capabilities of the retailer, they drag him under. More often than not, a ripple effect occurs and suppliers feel the demise in some manner (unpaid bills—or at least, lower than projected sales). If the ripples grow large enough, a distributor may sink. The next domino strikes the publisher, and the cycle is completed when the now decreased amount of material being published lowers the sales just enough to tip over the next retailer on the bubble.

Because the state of our industry is so fragile, it's important to realize that survival outweighs competition. It doesn't matter what size frog you are if there is no pond at all. To this end, I urge any retailer reading this column to please attend the trade show portion of the San Diego Con: you will pick up at least one idea that will ultimately pay for your trip. Everybody will benefit: the publishers, distributors, and retailers will be more prosperous (and therefore more likely to survive), and the customers will be better served through a larger array of product and more conveniently located stores.

Comics & Comix is working with a number of comic stores in the Bay Area to form a retailers' association to this end. *Nobody wins unless everybody wins.*

Next time I hope to dazzle you with all kinds of news of great things to come—and maybe even a few convention anecdotes! And in the meantime, see you in San Diego!

## Comics & Comix

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# MAIN LINES

Compiled by Eric Varber

Less than a month after its withdrawal from publishing, Capital Publications has begun negotiations to revive all three of its suspended series. At least three companies have shown interest in resuming NEXUS, THE BADGER, and WHISPER. Capital promises its readers that the continuity of the strips will not be affected by any changes in publisher or format.

Capital's departure from the comic book scene has not gone unnoticed. Messages of regret have been sent to the company from interested parties ranging from fans to distributors and publishers. "Many comic shop retailers stated that NEXUS, in particular, was one of their personal favorites," says editor Richard Bruning.

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Aardvark-Vanaheim has already taken over publishing duties for three titles originally published elsewhere. FLAMING CARRD!, a cult favorite by Bob Burden, appears in two issues of CEREBUS before making its debut in June as a black and white bimonthly.

In June A-V will also publish THE FILES OF MS. TREE, a reprint book featuring the first two adventures of the detective created by Max Collins and Terry Beatty. MS. TREE switches from Eclipse to A-V with issue #10 (July).

A third "new" title, Joshua Quagmire's CUTIE BUNNY, will be moving to color. The book's fourth issue, its first under the A-V banner, will appear in August.

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Comics & Comix was pleased to receive favorable mention in the April issue of PERSONAL ROBOTICS NEWS, the newsletter for the personal robotics industry. More robots coming this summer!

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OC Comics will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year with two series that will involve the continuity of virtually every OC title. OC UNIVERSE:



(C) Akutsu and Lee

A page from STARSTRUCK



A-V's FLAMING CARROT

call for the new team, "including a hero named VIBE who displays his powers while breakdancing!" (What a crossover for OAZZLER!)

Alan Moore fans should be on the lookout for upcoming issues of VIGILANTE and the "Green Arrow" back-up in DETECTIVE as the acclaimed writer has completed stories for each of these strips.

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JUST WHEN YOU WERE BEGINNING TO WONDER DEPT. Ms. Diedre Mills of San Diego has won the "Betty" look-alike contest held by Pacific Comics in conjunction with the "Rocketeer" strip. Her picture will appear in PACIFIC PRESENTS #5 along with a 20-page Rocketeer tale by Dave Stevens.

"Not many fans know that Dave contributed the storyboard art for the landmark music video, Michael Jackson's *Thriller*," editorial director Dave Scroggy says. "It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that Dave couldn't pass up, even if it meant setting aside 'The Rocketeer' for a while." PACIFIC PRESENTS #5, an all-Rocketeer issue, is set for June release.

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Kitchen Sink, known mainly to superhero fans through reprints of THE SPIRIT and STEVE CANYON, is moving closer to that audience with two upcoming titles. Rand Holmes' Harold Hedd appears in a two-part adventure in color on Baxter paper called HITLER'S COCAINE, which ships in July. This autumn will see Ronald Simpson's MEGATON MAN, a superhero take-off also in full-color on Baxter paper.

# **LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES.**



**AN EPIC FOR OUR TIME  
FROM A TIME YET TO COME**

**DELUXE FORMAT. NUMBER ONE.**

**FROM THE NEW OC.  
THERE'S NO STOPPING US NOW!**

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# THE FIRST TEAM THE SECOND YEAR

## TITLES

American Flagg!  
Black Flame  
Dynamo Joe  
E-Man  
Grimjack  
Jon Sable, Freelance  
Mars  
Munden's Bar  
Outrider  
Starslayer  
Warp

## GRAPHIC NOVEL

Beowulf

## WRITERS

Howard Chaykin  
Del Close  
Peter B. Gillis  
Mike Grell  
Marc Hempel  
Paul Kupperberg  
Charles Meyerson  
John Ostrander  
Joe Staton  
Tim Truman  
Mark Wheatley

## ARTISTS

Hilary Barta  
Jerry Bingham  
Steve Bissette  
Pat Broderick  
Rick Burchett  
Howard Chaykin  
Lenin DelSol  
George Freeman  
Mike Grell  
Mike Gustovich  
Marc Hempel

Don Lomax  
Bruce Patterson  
Doug Rice  
Jim Sherman  
Joe Staton  
Tom Sutton  
Timothy Truman  
Rick Veitch  
Mark Wheatley  
Bill Willingham

## LETTERERS

Ken Bruzenak  
Janice Chiang  
Jack McKart  
Bruce Patterson  
Rick Taylor  
John Workman

## COLORISTS

Janice Cohen  
Wendy Fiore  
Bruce Patterson  
Rick Taylor  
Alex Wald  
Leslie Zahler

## STAFF

Joe Staton — Art Director  
Rick Oliver — Associate Editor  
Alex Wald — Production Coordinator  
Doug Rice — Production Assistant  
Kathy Kotsivas — Office Manager  
Lynn Danford — Bookkeeper  
Laurel Fitch — Secretary  
Ivy Graham — Secretary

All the talented professionals above contributed to the continuing success of First Comics. We gratefully acknowledge their support and contributions.

Mike Gold,                   Richard Felber,                   Rick Obadiah,  
Managing Editor           Business Manager           Publisher

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First Comics is upgrading its format and raising its prices. Starting with all July releases, First's books will be printed on a whiter paper stock than that used in Mando books, with a richer type of ink. Each issue will still contain 28 pages of comics. All books will retail for \$1.25.

WARP and MARS will shift to bimonthly schedules beginning this summer. WARP #17 will appear in June, MARS #10 in July. The two books will alternate in this fashion, one or the other always appearing on the fourth week of a given month.

Nicola Cuti, original E-MAN writer, will return to the book for a single issue. The story, to be drawn by Joe Staton, delves into the past of detective Michael Mauser. Cuti currently spends most of his working time as an editor at DC Comics. His issue of E-MAN should appear early next year.

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Comico has announced that it will publish THE ELEMENTALS by Bill Willingham. The strip originally appeared in THE JUSTICE MACHINE ANNUAL #1 from the now-defunct Texas Comics. THE ELEMENTALS will be on Baxter paper for \$1.50. The first issue will ship in June.

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Marvel Comics is producing a special comic for the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse. The comic features Spider-Man and Power Pack in stories designed to help children deal with situations in which adults might abuse them. Anne E. Cohn, executive director of the committee, says "Many children are more likely to pick up and read through a comic book and to absorb messages which they might ignore from other sources."



(C) Marvel Comics Group



(C) DC Comics

Stan Lee is returning to Marvel Comics to script two of his most popular strips. SPOILER-MAN ANNUAL #18, plotted by Tom DeFalco and drawn by Ron Frenz and Bob Layton, concerns the wedding of J. Jonah Jameson with an uninvited Scorpion in attendance. WHAT IF #50 features "What if Dr. Doom had Kept the Powers of the Silver Surfer?" based on the Lee-Kirby FANTASTIC FOUR and plotted by DeFalco with art by Klaus Janson (Butch) Guice.

Steve Ditko will become the regular artist on ROM as of issue #59. Bob Layton will do the finishes for ROM #59, with Klaus Janson inking issue #60.

The Epic line expands this summer. Coming up is SIX FROM SIRIUS, science fiction from Doug Moench and Paul Gulacy. The four-part series will premiere in June. July will see the VOIO INDIGO graphic novel by Steve Gerber and Val Mayerik. The first regular issue of this present-day sword and sorcery series will ship in September. CRASH RYAN, a pulpish aviator strip, will begin a four-issue run in August. Ron Harris will write and draw the strip. Also in August is STARSTRUCK, the satirical work of Michael Kaluta and Elaine Lee. A series will begin two months after the graphic novel appears.

ALIEN LEGION will present a new type of back-up story with each issue, beginning with #2. Associate Editor Laurie Sutton says "These back-ups are somewhat experimental in that they are moments from the story that are expected to give deeper insights into a character or a situation." Terry Shoemaker and Carl Potts have drawn the first one, with Chris Waring handling the art for those in #3 and #4.

To end on a lighter note, Marvel reports that CRYSTAR has been dropped. And you all know what happens to little crystal men when you drop them, don't you???



(C) Frank Cirocco



(C) Mike Mignola

LOCAL BOYS MAKE GOOD DEPT. The above illos are pencils by three greater Bay Area artists. At left, a panel from Art Adams' LONGSHOT mini-series; at the upper right, Frank Cirocco's pencils on ALIEN LEGION #4; and at lower right, the star of Smilin' Mike Mignola's ROCKET RACCOON mini-series.



Richard McEnroe has started a future history series called "Far Stars and Future Times." I did not read the first of these (*THE SHATTERED STARS*), but the second, *FLIGHT OF HONOR* (Bantam, \$2.50), is a very interesting book. It deals with the clash between two different types of honor: the honor of a clan-based society with the honor of the Assassin's Guild, in the context of a galactic civilization that seems to have very little honor left in it. The questions McEnroe raises include how one knows one is right, and how different people can think exactly opposite things are right. He does this without making either side be wrong—which is a very difficult trick. This is an imperfect book: at times I couldn't tell whether he just wanted to tell an adventure story or whether he really wanted to talk about hard philosophical problems, and the writing style is more suited to an adventure story than to a deep tome. But this book is more than a simple story, and McEnroe deserves a lot of praise for trying.

The third volume of Terri Windling and Mark Alan Arnold's fantasy anthology series *ELSEWHERE* (Ace, \$3.95) is just about perfect. There are stories by old favorite authors from Amos Tutuola to Patricia McKillip, wonders from relatively new authors like P.C. Hodgell and Pat Murphy, and poetry from writers like Robert Graves and Leonard Cohen. A few of the stories are weak (Jane Yolen's did nothing for me), but the gems like Patricia McKillip's "A Matter of Music" and the Hodgell and Murphy stories kept me reading raptly. There's a nice blend of the dramatic and the humorous here: James Blaylock's spoof on Great Adventurer stories comes right after a Steven Boyett ghost story, for example. Even if you don't read much short fiction, you should probably get this book. It has about the best of modern fantasy and may get you started on an author or two you never knew before.

Even though it isn't science fiction, I want to review the new Modesty Blaise book, *THE NIGHT OF MORNINGSTAR* (Pan, \$1.75; or \$4.95 as imported by Ben Stark). I've been a fan of these books for years; they are superior, well-researched, remarkably human thrillers. Name me another series with heterosexually active partners in danger who don't sleep with each other or even want to. This book is typical of the series: an absolutely detestable villain, an odd skill introduced near the beginning used unexpectedly at the end, impeccable pacing, and wonderful main characters. If you are only familiar with the comic strips of Modesty, try the novels; and if you read thrillers at all, be sure to give these a try. The most annoying thing about this

## S.F. SIDELINES BY TOM WHITMORE

series is the packaging: these books are not soft-core pornography, despite the way the publishers always package them. I wouldn't be surprised if the reason these books stopped being published in this country after the fourth novel was that the people who wanted trashy novels just stopped buying them. I'd love to see how the books would do with packaging like that given Dick Francis or Dorothy Sayers.

For those of you who are seriously interested in the nature and meaning of science fiction, or want to read structuralist criticism by a real stylist, I have but to announce that there is a new book of criticism by Samuel R. Delaney to make you scour the bookstores. The book is called *STARBOARD WINE* (Dragon Press, \$29.00; all copies signed) and is another fascinating look into the mind of one of SF's greats. It includes essays on authors (Heinlein, Russ, Sturgeon, and Disch), on trends in the field (from publishing to story lines), and on the nature of storytelling. If you think you might be interested in this, but don't want to spend the money, find a copy of *THE JEWEL-HINGED JAW*, Delaney's earlier essay collection, which was a large-sized paperback from Berkley. And be prepared to be challenged: Delaney expects a lot from his readers, but gives good insights in return.

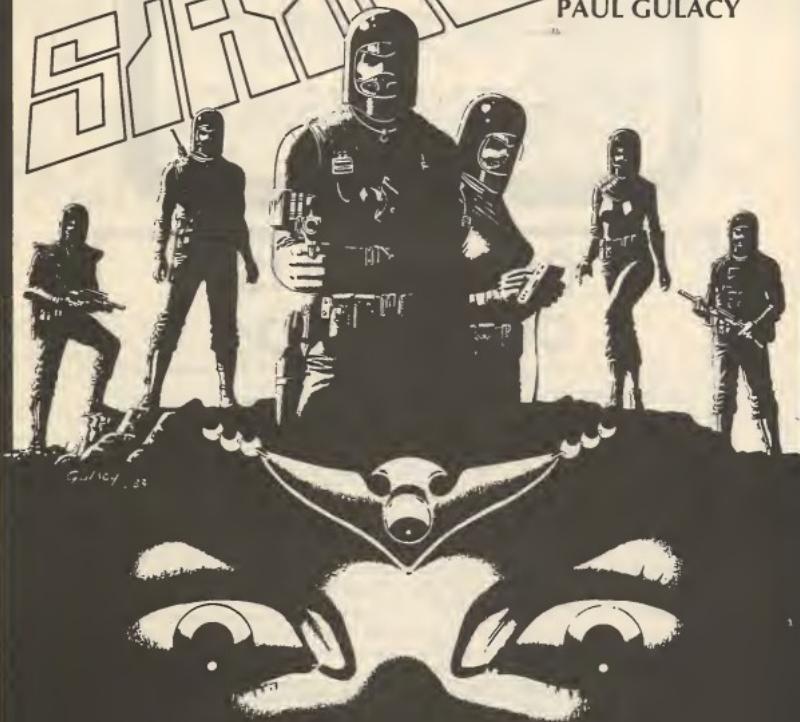
The Nebula Awards were given in Long Beach on April 29th. Best Novel went to David Brin's *STARTIDE RISING*. Greg Bear got two Nebulas: one for the novella "Hardfought" and one for the novelette "Blood Music." Gardner Dozois won for his short story "The Peacemaker." Andre Norton got a Grand Master Award for her long and valued service to the field.

And now that the Nebula Awards are over, it's time to think about the Hugos. To list all the nominees in all categories would take more space than I have, so I'll just tell you that the novel nominees are *STARTIDE RISING*, MacAvoy's *TEA WITH THE BLACK DRAGON*, Varley's *MILLENIUM*, Asimov's *THE ROBOTS OF DAWN*, and McCaffrey's *MDRETA: DRAGONLADY OF PERN*. If you want to join the World Science Fiction Convention and vote, you'd better hurry: the deadline for returning ballots is July 16th. Their address is LACON II, P.O. Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA, 91409; attending memberships are currently \$50 and corresponding memberships (which entitle you to vote and get publications) are \$20. The Con runs from August 30 through September 4, and it's at the Anaheim Convention Center.

\*\*\*\*\*  
*Tom Whitmore is a well-respected member of the science fiction and fantasy field and co-owner of THE OTHER CHANGE OF HOBBIT, a fine SF and fantasy bookstore, located in Berkeley's Sather Gate Mall.*

# SIX FROM SIRIUS

by  
DOUG MOENCH  
and  
PAUL GULACY



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SIX.  
To save a billion innocent lives.

SIX.  
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DENVER HILTON • 1550 Court. Details to come • Tables \$80.00

### BOSTON, MA. • JULY 14-15

PARK PLAZA • 50 Park Plaza • Comics and Doctor Who Convention. Tables \$125.00

### CHICAGO • JULY 21-22

Details to be announced - Star Trek and Doctor Who Show.

Send table fees to: Creation, Box 7155, Garden City, NY 11530. Information: 1 (516) 747-2033. All conventions open 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. Hotel reservations - call us at number above to get lower than normal rates.

# DAVID SCROGGY: JUGGLING THE BOOKS AT PACIFIC



Master juggler DAVID SCROGGY

*David Scroggy wears many hats at Pacific Comics. As Editorial Director for the company, his typical day includes developing new titles and products, checking on deadlines, mailing manuscripts to artists, commissioning pencilized pages, assigning work to colorists and letterers, determining when revisions are necessary, and ultimately, forming a bridge between the various creative components of a project. In addition to his editorial duties, David is also in charge of several aspects of promotion for Pacific: he writes most of the company's ad copy, produces their coming attractions brochure, and coordinates guest appearances, among other things. With such a demanding workload, it's a miracle that David found the time for this interview!*

I first met David at a Creation Convention in Anaheim about a year ago. Prior to that time, he was only a disembodied voice over the telephone, screaming "Wugga wugga!" at various intervals throughout otherwise sedate business conversations. That was the first indication that I was dealing with someone slightly off-the-wall! (It wasn't 'till some time later that I discovered that "Wugga Wugga" was, in fact, the name of a column Scroggy wrote for THE BUYER'S GUIDE a few years ago.) I have since come to realize that David is one of the more amiable fellows in this business. Certainly he's always been extremely supportive of THE TELEGRAPH WIRE and it's a great pleasure to spotlight him in these pages. Many thanks to David for all the time and energy he devoted to this interview and to Rick Geary for his cover illustration this issue, with a special nod to Tom Luth for his dandy coloring job.

This interview was conducted by telephone in early May (after an aborted previous attempt in April). It was transcribed to perfection by Joanne Streit, copy-edited by David Scroggy, with final edits by --

-- Diana Schutz

DIANA: How did a nice boy from Akron, Ohio end up in San Diego as Editorial Director for Pacific Comics?

DAVID: When I left Akron I lived for a while on Cape Cod, returned to Akron, and after about eight months there, decided I didn't want to stay in Akron any more. It was February and a friend of mine, Jon Hartz, and I decided to take off for California. It's interesting because we had thought as we drove out there that we'd like to get into comic books, with Jon as the artist and me as the writer. Of course we were heading in exactly the wrong direction, since in 1975 all the comic book publishing was in New York! But we wound up in San Diego and oddly enough, years later, we found ourselves in the comic business.

DIANA: Was it the San Diego Comic-Con that brought you west?

DAVID: Oh no, I didn't come to California for the San Diego Con! In fact I'd never heard of it before. But shortly after Jon and I arrived, we were prowling around one of the old bookstores in downtown San Diego and we came across a flyer for the convention, the 1975 convention. We wrote a letter to the convention--we thought it would be this big organization--and offered our services for free admission, and lo and behold the president Richard Butner invited us to a committee meeting at someone's apartment; we attended and very quickly found ourselves working on that year's convention as hotel liaison--which was a position they created for us--interfacing between the hotel and all of the many guests. That's what led to my getting back into comics and working for Pacific Comics and writing a column for THE BUYER'S GUIDE a few years ago: most of that came around through the Comic-Con. But we just came to California because it seemed like a nice place to go.

DIANA: So how did your current job evolve?

DAVID: My job has changed as the company has changed and grown. When I started working for Pacific Comics I came in as the manager of their Pacific Beach store, at the time when they were expanding from one comic book store to two. I took over the store where the back-issue mail-order operation was, and as the company evolved into a direct-sales distributor and then to a publisher, I wore many hats along the way. Once publishing made up a significant part of the business, there was an opportunity for me to move one hundred percent into publishing, which is what I wanted to do.

DIANA: What do you do, day in day out, as Editorial Director?

DAVID: I monitor the progress of all the material at the various stops along the way between the writer and the artist, the inker, letterer, and colorist. I coordinate the delivery of all of the books and also edit several books myself--which involves selecting writers, artists, stories, etcetera, or working with the creators to keep it fresh and be a sounding board for them.

DIANA: On that account, given that the Pacific books are creator-owned, do you encounter certain problems in dealing with the writers and artists?

DAVID: What you'd like to do, editorially, is to emphasize a creator's strengths and minimize his weaknesses, and you sometimes have people who, when they're in charge of the whole package, do the best they can but just are not as competent to tell the whole picture. Sometimes you're dependent on creators to deliver you a whole package, and if they're late, or weak in certain areas, sometimes with creator-owned books you don't have the ability to go in and, say, assign an inker, or get a scripter, or something like that. So that can involve not being able to fill in, sometimes having to wait. Really, the best defense against that, when you're working with creators or packagers, is just to surround yourself with good reliable people--and certainly something we've learned as we take on new projects is to not repeat some of the mistakes we've made in the past and to make sure that all the new things we get are going to come out on time.

DIANA: What about the books that you're more closely involved with, like SUN-RUNNERS or VANGUARD, for example--

DAVID: VANGUARD, the new PACIFIC PRESENTS, VANITY, what about them?

DIANA: What goes on with the editing there, given that they're creator-owned? Are you in on plot conferences?

DAVID: Very much so.

DIANA: But because they're creator-owned, doesn't that make for a certain amount of potential conflict in your position?

DAVID: It's in everyone's best interests to have the best possible package, so it's not really an adversary relationship. Certainly some books that we publish are packages that people provide to us in total, and some of them are packages that we ourselves at Pacific Comics put together and commission, and that's the case with virtually all the books that I edit, so it varies really a lot depending on the package. On a book like GRDD my function will be minimal at best--basically just a coordinator. Certainly when you're working with people like Sergio [Aragones] and Mark Evanier there's very little for me to do input-wise--it's the best product we could

possibly have. On a book like VANGUARD where you're dealing with new talent and people who are just getting into comics for the first time, and in many cases putting together new talent with established talent, there's quite a lot of editing involved and quite a lot of working with the writers on the script and the artists on the art and so forth. So my contribution will vary from book to book. A book like SUN-RUNNERS is certainly in very good hands as GRDD is, but as these books evolve I'm very much involved with Roger [McKenzie] and Pat [Broderick] in terms of the story ideas and so forth. We have plot conferences and story sessions all the way down the line. Once again, I'm not there to imprint my editorial vision on Roger and Pat, it just turned out that we have similar points of view regarding the direction of the book, and it makes for a better package.

DIANA: To go back to something you said earlier, Pacific has had certain scheduling problems in the past, but lately you seem to have overcome them. What's your policy as regards advertising books and then having them appear as promised?

DAVID: Pacific's business has expanded very rapidly and in several cases we've caused delays through both our inexperience as publishers and just the strain of having to expand our production facilities and acquire equipment and people. Now we've reached the point where we've made a lot of our mistakes and we're getting better. We recently took a look at the Pacific Premieres coming attractions brochure that we publish--

DIANA: Which you also write.

DAVID: Yes, I write that and put that all together along with Lynn Cobb and Paul Tallerday, but I write all the copy and coordinate that publication. We took a look at those and compared the dates we said the books would ship with our having the artwork in house, and we find that we're really in the best shape we've been in since we started publishing. We have in house art for everything that our Pacific Premieres say we're going to release all the way through June, and on selected titles all the way through August and September. So we've been able to build up a backlog. It takes a long time to do that when you don't have the monetary resources of a Marvel or a DC.

DIANA: You're certainly putting out a number of new titles. What's the rationale behind that, particularly in light of your scheduling difficulties in the past?

DAVID: Well, we'll keep trying 'til we get it right! [Laughter] No, we are adding titles and subtracting titles at the same time, so really the overall output is not as increased as it might seem from the number of new titles. There are titles that will be reaching their end, too: SILVERHEELS, BOLD ADVENTURE, and SOMERSET HOMES, so some of the new stuff will fill in there. We have several new titles and we feel that we are slowly building a generic brand name recognition as a line and that we're going to fight for our share of the marketplace and our share of the rack.

DIANA: Don't you feel, though, that the market is already dangerously flooded with product?

DAVID: Once again let me point out that the amount of titles per month from Pacific is not going to increase radically--we publish about eight titles a month. Our next solicitation of comics will include, I think, seven comic titles and one black and white trade paperback, so while there are new titles coming in we won't really be putting out a whole lot more comics each month than we are currently.



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DIANA: How do you see the differences between Pacific and Marvel or DC—or the differences between the independents and the so-called mainstream companies?

DAVID: Well, one is that they certainly sell a whole lot more comics! [Laughter] They're both very large, well-financed companies. DC, as most people know, is a subsidiary of Warner, and Marvel is hooked up with Cadence and they're very profitable in comics. Pacific Comics enjoys the advantage of being distributors too, and we've recently begun to run an item in our retailer's catalogue, listing, based on our orders, what we determine to be the market share on a percentage basis, and on our last one Marvel had approximately 58.5% of the total number of comic copies sold, and DC had about 28% or 29%, and then all of the independents combined accounted for something like 10% to 13% of the market. So you're talking about a very radical difference in terms of the amount of product and the amount of capitalization involved. We do feel that the tremendous upsurge in new products has definitely made a dent in sales for the independents and I think that the independents are feeling the pinch.

DIANA: Can you comment on the state of the independents in general, particularly in light of the so-called "big dump"?

DAVID: Well, I think it's going to be touch and go. Currently in the summer we're seeing that some of the independents have to make some hard decisions. I feel that Pacific Comics is in perhaps the best position saleswise of any independent, but we're all out there struggling very hard to increase our sales and increase our market share. It seems as though the generic name of a Marvel or DC is something that causes dealers to order the books in greater numbers. For example, when we talk to Comics & Comix and ask John Barrett how our books are selling, he says that our books are selling great. And when we ask him how many ALIEN WORLDS he ordered for his seven stores he might say 800, and when we ask him how many SECRET WARS he ordered for his stores he'll tell us 16,000, but our books "are selling great!" [Laughter] A lot of the retailers tend to not stock the independent comics in depth. The reason for that is, in the early days, there came a time of the so-called "big dump" when dealers found themselves stuck with a lot of independents, because when collectors came in the store, along with their independents were a large number of very nice reprint packages from Marvel and DC at very high cover prices, and there's no question about it that many people bought the reprints before they bought the latest E-MAN or SILVERHEELS. And, consequently, a lot of the retailers found themselves overstocked on independent comics, didn't feel comfortable speculating on them, and as a result, began to order to sell out. I think in the case of at least a lot of our books, we have a huge audience for titles like ALIEN WORLDS or GROO that is discovering them every day. And dealers who do stock them are reporting people coming in and buying complete sets. However, a lot of dealers feel as though they should order to sell out. And they might order 20 copies of GROO, sell out and say to themselves "How nice, I'm not stuck with any GROOS." And they're not really ordering ten more and ten more and ten more. Who knows, they might eventually sell 70, 80, or 100, but they'll never know! So I think, to a degree, there's a conservatism on the part of the dealers

that maybe is reducing the sale of a more potentially popular product. Hard to blame them, though, for being conservative. Ultimately, though, I think that the books are selling pretty well.

DIANA: What is it about the Pacific line of books that makes them different or better than the rest of what's out there?

DAVID: Well, I think we certainly lavish a lot of care on their production. When we entered comics publishing, our philosophy behind getting into the game was to motivate the creators to create their best work. By offering creators ownership and paying them on a royalty basis we wanted to give them a free hand to create their best work. At the same time we have tried to surround ourselves with the very best creators in comics, and I think to a surprising degree we've been successful. When people ask us what our house style is, we try to say "Excellence," because we certainly have a diverse line. One of the interesting points our readers' surveys have borne out to us and what a surprising percentage of people say to the question "What do you like best about Pacific Comics?" is "diversity of art style" or



From SUN-RUNNERS #4: naked breasts okay, but elephant genitalia are seemingly taboo

"different kinds of books."

DIANA: Different concepts, in other words.

DAVID: Right, so one thing I hope that we're doing, to a degree anyway, is trying new things and trying to do something a little different, a little better, and a little more considered. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't, like anything else, but I think to a large degree we've not only been successful but are improving now noticeably. I suppose I should mention also that we're gearing a lot of our material for an older reader, and in some cases this apparently is controversial.

DIANA: Okay, let's pick up on that right now. What is Pacific's stand on the censorship issue, given that some of your books contain a certain level of violence and nudity?

DAVID: We did introduce one thing, our "Recommended for Mature Readers" label—and I think we're still the only color comics publisher making that recommendation. So we have titles like TWISTED TALES and ALIEN WORLDS that, within the context of a good, well-written story, are also not turning away from sex or violence in the context of their specific genres. If we were allowed to rate the comic books with the letters that the movies use, however, I don't think there's anything in TWISTED TALES or ALIEN WORLDS that would go beyond an 'R' rating. We are not trying to be gratuitous with sex and violence and we're not trying to do X-rated comic books. I hope one of the things that does not happen, given the current



Gore for mature readers only...

debate on the contents of comic books, is that a negative connotation is given to the term 'adult'. For many years comics were something that you 'grow out of,' and it's nice to think that now they might be something that you grow *into*.

DIANA: Just on that point, however, if we're trying to make comics for adults an acceptable proposition--

DAVID: Who's "we"? Comic fans have wanted that, yes. It's a medium that... A great quote from Will Eisner is "What's wrong with comics? Nothing's wrong with comics. Ask me what's wrong with comic book editors and publishers and artists and writers, and I'll have plenty to tell you." [Laughter] And certainly there is, I believe, a vast untapped adult audience out there for comic books, but I think it will be a long time before that audience really is important enough to be the audience that's catered to. Our books are targeted for a reader between 17 and 30 years of age, which might indicate someone who's perhaps read early Marvels at one time or who might have read underground comix and possibly hasn't thought about comics in 10 or 12 years. I think when you're talking about the mass market you're still going to find the stigma against comic books very slow to erode, even now. I do hope that the placement of comics in bookstores like Waldenbooks and B. Dalton's will help promote an interest in comic books for readers of all ages. I think if that stimulates someone to at least visit a comic book store, then I think a Pacific Comics product will stack up very well.

DIANA: My question kind of boils down to this: Given that you're targeting your books at a 17-30 year-old audience, isn't it sort of redundant to put that maturity recommendation on some of the titles?

DAVID: No, because comic books are still, by many people, considered to be the province of children. A significant portion of some dealers' clientele is young people, say 12 or 13 years old, and there may be some objection on the part of their parents or whatever to some of the contents of a book, say, like TWISTED TALES. We recognize the fact that some stores may not wish to sell a book like TWISTED TALES to young children. Yet we realize that with 150 or so comic books coming out every month, a dealer does not always have the time to read every comic book

before he puts it on the rack. Consequently, we're trying to avoid a lot of difficulty on the part of some concerned retailers and distributors about what might be viewed as objectionable contents. We are not saying these books have to be sold to adults only; we are saying that some people may find the subject matter unsuited to young children. Consequently, dealers who have that concern can very easily identify books that they may wish to display in a special area or something like that.

DIANA: You're not worried about hurting sales on those books?

DAVID: Well, we're just trying to nip any objections in the bud. Do they hurt sales? No, because we're not really saying these books are for adults only. You do not have to be 18 to buy TWISTED TALES or ALIEN WORLDS. We just wish to point out that there is some material in there that some people might be offended by.

DIANA: Who's the arbiter for that, who decides?

DAVID: My grandmother! We send all the books to my grandmother in Akron, Ohio, and if she says I can read 'em they go out, we put 'em out without the label, and if she says I can't read 'em then they get the mature readers' label on them! [Laughter]

DIANA: Pacific is also beginning to reprint a number of books--you've done that in the past, what with the Starlin DARKLON reprint and some of the Wrightson stuff.

DAVID: All the Wrightson stuff.

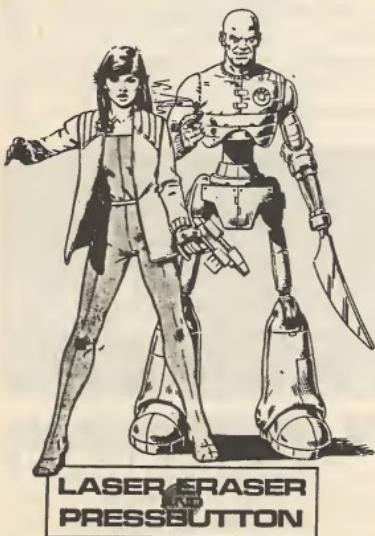
DIANA: Okay. Given the problems that have been generated by the influx of high quality reprints, what's Pacific's stand on putting out reprints now?

DAVID: Well, first of all, most of the reprints we're doing are material that's never been in color before, and also it's material that hasn't been widely available. Obviously when you're doing a reprint you don't have as much initial outlay, and when you commission a comic book you're really putting out a lot of money that you don't see a return on for quite a long time. So it's viable for us as a publisher faced with a kind of softening of sales... Certainly a reprint is less up-front money and can therefore be profitable



...but crotch shots for all!

while selling fewer copies. We have been very concerned about the *quality* of the material that we're reprinting, and I do think the things that we're reprinting are material that is well worth reprinting. Our main two reprint books now will be bimonthly titles and they will alternate, very much like TWISTED TALES and ALIEN WORLDS do. And those will be British material, from Quality Communications, which has appeared in black and white in WARRIOR magazine, an import in some specialty shops. One of those titles will be PRESSBUTTON, and the other will be CHALLENGER, an anthology title that will carry some regular features and some occasional stories. One of the regular features will be "V for Vendetta" by Alan Moore and David Lloyd, all newly colored. I don't know who will be coloring in CHALLENGER, but Les Dorscheid will be coloring PRESSBUTTON. So this is material that has reached a very limited audience, and only in black and white, so we feel that while it is a reprint, this one's almost like a first U.S. print-run, you might say. The other reprint title is JERRY IGER'S FAMOUS FEATURES; and Jerry Iger, for those who don't know, was a comic book packager, packaging one of the very first comics, JUMBO COMICS, and who went on to be one of the prime producers of comic books from the late '30s into the 1950s and who, in his various corporate entities, was involved with some of the real greats of the business, like Will Eisner, Lou Fine, Matt Baker, and Ruth Roche. So JERRY IGER'S FAMOUS FEATURES is once again drawing on a wealth of material, but material which is very obscure, although it will be brand new material to the majority of today's readers. The reprint situation is still a little different for us than it is for Marvel and DC who in many cases purchased this stuff as work-made-for-hire, and the royalties a lot of the creators received from these reprints were minimal at best, so for us to do reprints is probably a bigger outlay than it is for Marvel and DC. Rather than talk about the "big dump" though, we would like to take the profile that if we do good



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(C) Dave Stevens  
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From PACIFIC PRESENTS #5: The Rocketeer meets his match!

product, if we put out excellent comic books, we believe they will sell even if there are a hundred comics around them on the stands. We go into publishing with that belief and it seems that with our quality titles the market bears us out.

DIANA: Aside from the reprints, what other new projects has Pacific got on tap currently?

DAVID: Well, quite a few. One of the reprints, JERRY IGER'S FAMOUS FEATURES #4, will be another 3-D book. It will reprint an obscure book from 1953: 3-D SHEENA JUNGLE QUEEN. It will reprint two of the stories from that and will feature a brand new cover by Dave Stevens of Sheena. And it also takes a couple of other obscure 1940s features of the jungle nature and puts them in 3-D for the first time--all of the 3-D material is being completely redone by Ray Zone, the man who did 3-D ALIEN WORLDS. Other new projects include PATHWAYS TO FANTASY, an anthology packaged under the auspices of Bruce Jones Associates, which--as ALIEN WORLDS is science fiction and TWISTED TALES is horror--will be fantasy stories. It will probably be directed more toward a general audience than TWISTED or ALIEN. We've got some great stuff lined up for it too. The first couple of issues we've got people like Barry Windsor-Smith, John Bolton, Frank Brunner, Jeff Jones, Scott Hampton, Bo Hampton, and Chris Miller--really a nice batch of people. Also, we'll be introducing several new characters in PACIFIC PRESENTS. It will become sort of a showcase book for new characters who could spin off into their own titles, and it will also be an outlet for top professionals who perhaps can't work for us all of the time but who are able to do an occasional piece now and then. PACIFIC PRESENTS will adopt a monthly status two months after PACIFIC PRESENTS #5 is released--which will feature "The Rocketeer" by Dave Stevens. We also have a new title called STRANGE DAYS from the British artist/writer team of Peter Milligan and Brendan McCarthy.

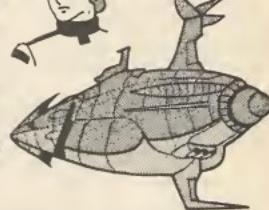
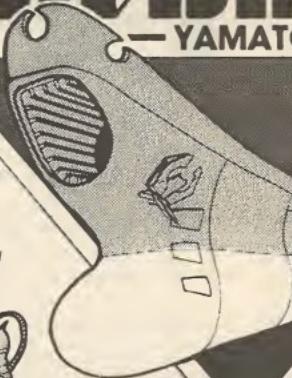
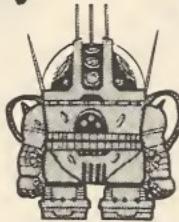
DIANA: Pacific is also starting up a line of graphic novels, with Frank Brunner's being the first.

DAVID: That's right, Frank Brunner's is going to be the first; it's called SEVEN SAMURAI. It's written and illustrated totally by Frank Brunner, although

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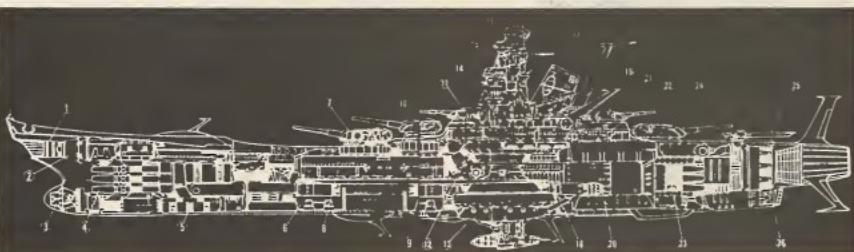
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it's been edited by Bruce Jones and April Campbell. The colors are full color by Frank Brunner and Jan Brunner. That will be Pacific Comics Graphic Novel #1. We do plan other graphic novels; we have commissioned a SUN-RUNNERS graphic novel--an original story by Roger McKenzie and Pat Broderick. And a third graphic novel's planned for around Christmastime which will be a first American trade paperback edition of Bruce Jones and Berni Wrightson's *FREAK SHOW*. So that's how the graphic novel line looks so far. We are going very slowly on the graphic novels because they are more time-consuming projects and we don't want any MS. MYSTICS in the graphic novel department! [Laughter]



One of PC's most exciting new strips: "Paradox" in STRANGE DAYS #1

DIANA: One of the things that you've brought up in conversation with me is the potential collectability of Pacific's titles, of the better quality books. What's your justification for saying that?

DAVID: Well, I think a lot of the same reasons that made some of the '40s comics collectable: limited distribution, spotty distribution, and in the case of the Pacific books especially, a vast audience out there that really isn't aware of their existence. At the same time I think that although there are more people preserving comics, it's no secret that speculation, especially on independents, is at a minimum, and I think our print runs, while relatively low, are selling out on the stands--a surprisingly large percentage of them. We cut our print runs very close to the actual orders, and sometimes when you compare the supply with the potentiality of the demand, especially on the *better* books, I think

you're seeing some real future collector's items.

DIANA: So you don't think that lagging sales in the back-issue market will affect the collectability of Pacific's titles?

DAVID: I think the direct sales market, once it gets over the hump of this glut of product, is really still continuing to expand, and if you take the longer view of ten years or so, comic sales in general are increasing and I think the potentiality is there. I think you're going to see a definite shake-out in terms of the amount of new titles and over some period of time I do think you're going to see a winnowing out here, and the back-issue market could well rebound. I don't think you're going to see any MARVEL MYSTERY #is come out of the direct sales market, but I think the potential for investment is there. Once again the tough-to-find books that are good will, I think, continue to appreciate. I think AMERICAN FLAGG! is a solid collectable, and I think ALIEN WORLDS and GRD books like that--SOMERSET HOLMES--are all so-called prime collectables too, for years to come. I don't think anyone's going to make a killing on turning them over quickly, like a lot of people seemed to do with the first Simonson THOR. You never know. Books like STARSAYER #3, with the second appearance of "The Rocketeer", are bona fide hard-to-find books that there's a steady demand for, both for STARSAYER which is now at First and for "The Rocketeer".

DIANA: Okay, back to David Scroggy--you've spent a fair amount of time writing poetry and you've gotten grants for doing that, haven't you?

DAVID: Well, I received a grant for writing poetry at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Massachusetts in 1971-72. It's something that I'd like to pursue sometime.

DIANA: Do you have any desire to translate that writing ability into writing for comics?

DAVID: I don't have a burning desire to do that--it's difficult for me to find the time to do it and do it right. I do have an idea for a comic book that may or may not see the light of day, but by and large no, I'm not a frustrated comic book writer. I enjoy comics and I enjoy working with comic book writers and artists and I think that I'm able to form a bridge between the creative components of a comic book; but in terms of really having a lot of comic book stories that are dying to get out...no. [Laughs]

DIANA: You're forming bridges in other ways too: you're also working as an agent, I understand.

DAVID: That's right. In addition to my duties at Pacific Comics, I represent four artists: John Pound, Chris Miller, Joe Chiodo, and Rick Geary--

DIANA: Who's doing the cover for this issue.

DAVID: Who's doing the cover for this issue, right. I've been representing John and Rick since 1980, and Joe and Chris for a shorter time, and have been successful in keeping them busy and selling their work to a variety of clients.

DIANA: Is there any conflict of interest there, given the dual roles that you're playing, one at "Pacific and one as an independent agent?

DAVID: No, because I don't really represent comic book packages. If I was representing comic book packages in the sense that Mike Friedrich does, where I was offering these people's work to the highest bidder in the format of color comic book packages, I think there would be a definite conflict of interest,



(C) Frank Brunner

An advance look at SEVEN SAMUROID,  
PC's first graphic novel

but most of the artists that I work with are primarily illustrators, painters who do covers for paperback books and comic books. And we have used them, but we would have used them anyway. I don't think there is a conflict of interest, though; the only conflict of interest is if the agenting time begins to interfere with my time, with Pacific Comics' time or facilities. Bill and Steve [Schanes] are pretty understanding about it. I have been spending a lot of time wrestling with this time conflict, though. I am beginning to find that I'm somewhat restricted time-wise, and believe that I should be putting more into the artist representation business. Since I obviously can't do everything at once, this will force some hard decisions.

DIANA: That sounds like you're contemplating leaving Pacific!

DAVID: Well, I guess it does. I have to go where my best interests lie, and that could mean a career switch. I should have it all sorted out by the San Diego Con, so perhaps we'll do an update then.

DIANA: Well okay, is there anything else that you want to bring up that we haven't covered?

DAVID: Well, I'd just like to encourage--

DIANA: --everyone to buy, buy, buy...! [Laughter]

DAVID: Well yeah I would, I'd like to encourage people to spread the word a little bit. If there are readers out there who have a friend who ever thought about getting back into comics again, there's hardly a better time.

DIANA: Or a better place to start than Pacific.

DAVID: Right, and I think that if you like the stuff, show it to your friends, and continue to get more people into stores like Comics & Comix, 'cause I think there are a lot of people out there who are just missing out on an entertainment experience that they'd really enjoy.

## COMICS & COMIX CALENDAR

### Saturday, June 16

Final judging on the MINIATURE GAMING FIGURE PAINTING CONTEST takes place at 2 p.m. in our Citrus Heights store. For more information, call 916-969-0717.

### Saturday, June 23

ELRIC artist MICHAEL T. GILBERT teams up with JOURNEY writer/artist BILL LOEBS for a signing at our Palo Alto shop, noon - 2 p.m.

MICHAEL T. GILBERT and BILL LOEBS will then head up to our Berkeley location for more autographs and conversation, 5-7 p.m.

And in our Sacramento store it's WHEEL OF FORTUNE day wherein you spin your own discount. Discounts are good all day and for all Comics & Comix merchandise. Great savings!

### Sunday, June 24

The AMERICON Comics and Card Show takes place in Monterey, CA at the Monterey Conference Center, with guests SERGIO ARAGONES, MICHAEL T. GILBERT, VALENTINO, DAVE BERG, BILL LOEBS, and FRANK CIROCCO. Admission is \$3.50. For more information, contact Dan Vado, P.O. Box 6993, San Jose, CA, 95150.

### Tuesday, June 26 - Wednesday, June 27

COMIC BOOK EXPO 84, the first national trade show for comic book publishers, distributors, and retailers comes to San Diego with exhibits, seminars, and more. And Comics & Comix will be there! For more information, write to Fay Gates, Comic Book Expo 84, P.O. Box 17066, San Diego, CA, 92117.

### Thursday, June 28 - Sunday, July 1

It's the 15th annual SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON with guests FORREST J. ACKERMAN, HOWARD CHAYKIN, BURNE HOGARTH, JACK KIRBY, MARSHALL ROGERS, DAVE STEVENS, BILL WOODSON, BRANT PARKER, AL WILLIAMSON, STAN DRAKE, and many many others. The San Diego Con guest list usually reads like a Who's Who of comics--and this year is no exception! This is the one you can't afford to miss, folks. \$25 for the four-day membership. For more information, write to San Diego Comic-Con, P.O. Box 17066, San Diego, CA, 92117. See you there!

### Monday, July 2

MARY WILSHIRE, the talented penciller of RED SONJA, joins Marvel editor CARL POTTS for an appearance at our Berkeley store, 4-7 p.m.

### Saturday, July 7

WHEEL OF FORTUNE day at our Lombard store in San Francisco. Spin your own discount, all day!

### Saturday, July 21

WHEEL OF FORTUNE day, again, this time in Citrus Heights, all day.

### Saturday, August 4

More WHEEL OF FORTUNE: spin your own discount all day in our Berkeley store.

### Saturday, August 18

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# Schreck

## 1984's SCI FI CINEMA SUMMERTIME BLUES

/ by BOB SCHRECK

George Lucas, what have you done??? I know, I know! Three of the most incredible blockbusters in cinematic history. A phenomenon! A tapestry of genius that took nine years to weave onto a silver screen for the whole world to enjoy. The STAR WARS trilogy is a magnificent masterpiece and for those three films I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I do not thank you, however, for the onslaught of mindless goo that has been oozing off the screen trying to capitalize on your success. Even since the release of STAR WARS in '77, literally thousands of producers without idea one on making a science fiction or fantasy film have been very busy. Busy throwing truckloads of money at directors and crews to create films from scripts that have been turned down by the writing staff of "The Bozo Show".

These producers sit in big black buildings and play mumblety-peg with their \$2000 gold-filled, matching Dunhill pen and pencil sets. They think that just because you have spaceships in your films, that makes them hardcore science fiction. Never mind the concepts and dialogue! Now, you and I both know that your movies are a *fantasy set in space*. "A long time ago, far far away..." Right? Right. Aside from E.T. and a couple of good attempts (BLADE-RUNNER and BRAINSTORM), my local theatre has been a barren wasteland of bad acting, laughable effects, low budgets, and even lower scripts.

My complaint is not so much with the low budget movies--which, by the way, have a much higher percentage of near hits in regard to concepts and box office success. For example: STRANGE INVADERS. Not the greatest movie ever made, but at least it knew where it was going and got there. It successfully recreated the cheapo '50s atmosphere (deliberate bad acting, etc.) and in the meantime delivered some neat ideas, such as the human storage bubbles, and some good special effects makeup--with a

couple of good laughs on the side.

No, I don't have that large of an axe to grind with the low budget genre productions. What I do have a problem with are the corporations like Ladd and Paramount and Columbia--the companies that try (and sometimes succeed) to pull a big budget turkey out of the fire by the use of huge ad campaigns and low-balling video releases.

Films like STAR TREK I...The Motion Sickness. Paramount's \$40 million thalidomide baby, which did exactly what every good thalidomide baby does: it just sat there. And then, of course, we have STAR TREK II, THE WRATH OF KHAN, which is the perfect movie: good acting, tight script, good dialogue, excellent direction, and beautiful special effects. But not my idea of a great Star Trek science fiction concept deserving of a sequel. I'd much prefer a new story equal in quality to THE MENAGERIE or THE CITY ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER. It seems to me that STAR TREK has become a big character study lost in space. (No pun intended!)

We also have the Ladd Co. headed, of course, by Mr. Allan Ladd Jr., the man who gave George Lucas the go-ahead on STAR WARS. At that time, Mr. Ladd was a bigwig at 20th Century Fox. With his own company he decided to cash in on the science fiction market with what was basically JAWS-in-space: a slick production called ALIEN, with no characters, no dialogue, a script lifted from the 1950s movie IT, THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE, the genius of H.R. Giger's visual effects, and a gigantic ad campaign. Again, a slick production and lots of fun, but aside from what was hanging from the alien's chrome orthodontal work, there was no meat to the story!

Once JAWS-in-space made big bucks at the box office, Ladd went for HIGH-NOON-in-space. Thus, OUTLAND, with Sean Connery standing in for Gary Cooper. As far as I can tell, the only difference



Character (C) Paramount Pictures

Searching for Spock  
in STAR TREK III

between HIGH NOON and OUTLAND is the type of clock the sheriffs watched, waiting for their killer's arrival. Finally Ladd got really daring and attempted to put a real honest-to-good science fiction novel to the screen. Hooray! Bravo! Nice try, but all the special effects and Syd Mead artwork in the universe couldn't get BLADERUNNER out from under that horrible connect-the-dots narration—which sounded as if Harrison Ford was reading his lines while severely constipated.

One day I'd love to see a screen adaptation of Robert Silverberg's OOWARD TO EARTH or Harry Harrison's DEATHWORLD TRILOGY or even Asimov's THE COOS THEMSELVES, a film done with care and respect to the author's original intention. There are so many science fiction stories dying to be brought to life via the cinema. But the cinema must first cleanse itself of The Moronic Moguls of The Almighty Dollar before we'll get a chance to see them.

Which brings me to (get ready) 1984's Sci Fi Cinema Summertime Blues. The following is a list of this summer's SF/genre film releases, along with my comments of course. See for yourself...

**FIRESTARTER:** Hot off the Stephen King/Oino De Laurentiis assembly line. Two masters at boring an audience for a solid two hours.

**INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM:** Definitely a lot of fun and effects. But that's all, folks!

**STAR TREK III, THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK:** I call this one "Peyton Space!"

**GREMLINS:** Joe Dante (THE HOWLING) directs and Stephen Spielberg produces. This could go either way—I've got my fingers crossed.

**GHOSTBUSTERS:** Dan Ackroyd and Bill Murray star. Hopefully funny with great effects promised, but basically a romp through an expensive spook house.

**BUCKAROO BANZAI:** Get this, "A group of scientists turned rock musician adventurers." See whiz and golly!

**THE LAST STARFIGHTER:** Yeah? Well, who's he going to fight?

**THE PHILADELPHIA EXPERIMENT:** John Carpenter (HALLOWEEN) did the script based on a supposed actual occurrence. Scripting is not one of John's strongest talents.



MARK LENARO as Mr. Spock's father

Character (C) Paramount Pictures

**SUPERRGIRL:** After humiliating SWAMP THING and SUPERMAN, moviemakers just haven't learned. Say hello to the next abortion of a comic book character by Hollywood.

And last but not least...

**THE BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET:** Sounds like SF's version of BLACULA.

Pretty sad, huh? Now don't get me wrong: I'm all for having a good time. But once in a while I like to walk out of a theatre having to think about what I've just seen. For example, a genre movie called THE CHANGELING with George C. Scott—an excellent film which was a bomb at the box office a few years ago due to lack of publicity and a poor release date. How about THE EXORCIST? But not its sequel, "Twinkle Twinkle Killer Kane." There's A BOY AND HIS DOG by Harlan Ellison, or FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH, a British film released as a second bill to CREATURES THE WORLD FORGOT. Unfortunately, the film forgot the creatures too, and as a result, no one remembered either film. But that second bill had an SF script that would choke an executive.

It's a crime to watch billions of dollars being spent every year; and aside from Lucas and Spielberg films, billions of people are walking away untouched and unmoved by hours of pathetic boredom. Cinema is

# INDIANA JONES and the TEMPLE OF DOOM

Logo TM and (C) Lucasfilm Ltd.

not just pretty faces, fast cars, speeding spaceships, special effects, or selling tickets—though you'd never know it by looking at the aforementioned list. The cinema can be art. It can be enlightening as well as entertaining at the same time. Mr. Lucas knows.

Lucas' classic fairy tale trilogy has blended the philosophies of eastern and western civilizations and he has fed these ideas to us in the best sugar-coated pill ever created: Yoda. A 900-year old green Jedi with the eyes of Einstein and the soul of a saint. Some say Yoda is a rubber muppet created by Frank Oz and a bunch of technicians. I say Yoda is magic.

Mr. Lucas proved that you can sell tickets to something that isn't just an intergalactic hayride. I do wish Mr. Lucas would re-think his decision not to continue the STAR WARS saga. He's just about the only person with his head on straight enough to do the job right.

Well folks, that's about it for me. Here's hoping your summer is filled with happiness and growth. Good luck and happy moviegoing. May the Force be with you...you'll need it!

Thank god they haven't closed the libraries. I think I'll chase my summertime blues away with some sun, a few rum and cokes, and a couple of good books!

Just Trying To Be,

Bob Schreck

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# WHERE DO COMIC BOOKS COME FROM, DADDY?

by JIM FRIEL

Jim Friel is the manager of the Bud Plant Inc. San Francisco Bay Area Distribution Center. This article was originally written for his customers; it was then printed in COMICS COLLECTOR #4 and has since been revised and updated for this current printing. Shipping times discussed in the article are shipping times to the west coast.

Some customers have recently expressed curiosity (or at least confusion) concerning sources and methods of shipping of comic books in the new, drastically expanding direct sales market. Many of the new publishers and most of the older ones are using printers other than Spartan Printing Co., which used to produce virtually all color comics and many of the black and white magazines printed in North America. The following brief essay is an attempt to make the present situation more intelligible to those of you who may not be familiar with it--to provide a scorecard so you can tell who the players are. We'll begin with a list of printers currently producing color comics, with relevant information for each, such as location, publishers using the printer in question, and availability of air shipping to Bud Plant customers at this time.

## SPARTAN PRINTING CO., Sparta, Illinois

Also known as World Color Press, or simply "Sparta", this is still by far the largest comic book printer. Sparta produces all the newsprint and mando paper titles being published by DC, Eagle, and Marvel, as well as all titles currently being published by Archie. Shipments leave the printer on Thursdays. We usually receive air freight Friday mornings, followed by the regular (truck) shipment of the same titles on Monday afternoon or Tuesday. A typical week's shipment from Sparta consists of between 15 and 25 titles. At present, Sparta is the only printer from which Bud Plant Inc. is placing air freight orders.

## RONALD'S PRINTING, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Second to Spartan Printing at this time, Ronald's produces most of the white-paper comics published by DC, Eagle, and Marvel, as well as all the color titles from Eclipse. DC also prints their graphic novels at Ronald's. Shipping from Ronald's is erratic, both because of their limited production capacity and because an international border (and most of a fairly large continent) lies between them and us. Theoretically, however, Ronald's ships on Tuesdays or Wednesdays. We receive the shipment approximately 7-10 days later. A typical week's shipment from Ronald's consists of from two to six titles.

## ASSOCIATED LITHOGRAPHERS, Phoenix, Arizona

Associated currently prints all titles published by Pacific Comics as well as the Kitchen Sink SPIRIT. Shipments usually go out on Wednesday or Thursday. A typical week's shipping from Associated consists of two or three titles. Shipments from Associated usually arrive on Monday or Tuesday.

## DANNER PRESS, Canton, Ohio

Danner prints Marvel Graphic Novels, EPIC ILLUSTRATED, MARVEL SUPER SPECIAL, and the occasional Marvel Press book. They seem to ship whenever the mood strikes them, so the arrival of books from Danner can occur on any day of the week.

In addition to the printers listed above, we receive shipments from a different source for nearly every small publisher. Aardvark-Vanaheim, Comico, Americonics, Quest Pubs., Spectrum Comics, First, and WaRP Graphics, to use a few examples,

all use different printers, none of which is used by any of the other publishers listed above. Whether any of the publishers who have announced but not yet issued color comics (Vortex, Graphik, Fantagraphics) will use new printers or some of those with which we are familiar remains to be seen. The situation is almost certain to become more complex and potentially confusing, and thus more difficult to coordinate. Most magazine and fanzine publishers, of course, also use separate printers--HEAVY METAL comes to us from Nebraska; Starlog magazines from Kentucky; CINEFEX from Southern California; Fantagraphics, Kitchen Sink, and Dragon magazines from different locations in Wisconsin. Titan books are imported from England. Marvel Press (books and posters) and DC posters will probably add several more printers to our calculations.

When deciding when to set the cutoff point for invoicing and shipping or delivering each week's shipments, we usually consider only the Sparta and Ronald's shipments. As you can well imagine, waiting for any of the smaller or less predictable orders to arrive might easily cause more lost sales because of delay than could be offset by any potential gain from the additional merchandise.

\*\*\*\*\*

Some of the above information will probably be obsolete next week--things in direct-sales publishing change that quickly. So bear in mind when talking to us that questions such as "When are the comics arriving?" and "Are the comics on time this week?" are no longer very meaningful questions, unless you are ready for a fifteen minute run-down of all the shipments from various sources.

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## THE COMIC NEWS BULLETIN WITH THE EMPHASIS ON BULL

Neal Adams and the staff of Continuity Associates have announced their plans to release a new book in which all leading characters are portrayed by lizards. GECKO OF FUTURE PAST should appear this summer.

In an unexpected business transaction earlier this month, the CBS television company bought all characters from the financially troubled Harvey Comics. Major changes are scheduled for many of the books, as TV drama writers will be scripting regular features. Dallas writer Houston Farmington says he will be doing an involved story in one of their books, RICHIE FILTHY RICH, wherein Richie's corrupt cousin Reggie has a fling with Richie's girlfriend Gloria while in the Caribbean. Richie finds out about the torrid affair, and the first issue ends with the mysterious shooting of Reggie. Farmington will not reveal who the culprit is, but this reporter is inclined to believe the butler, Cadbury, did it.

DC superheroes Element Lad, Brainiac 5, and Dream Girl have all been hospitalized with a virus. Doctors have diagnosed the trio as having cases of Legionnaire's disease.

Artist/writer John Byrne says he has talked to a supermarket chain interested in publishing a free comic for publicity purposes. Byrne says his idea is about a group of Canadian shop-lifting detectives who possess special powers, and the title of the book will be ALPHA-BETA FLIGHT. Byrne also added that "the story is so good, once you read it you'll want to tell a friend."

Popular cartoonist Berke Breathed has agreed with HIGH TIMES magazine to draw a strip called 'SHROOM COUNTY'. The characters will be the same as in Breathed's syndicated feature, BLOOM COUNTY, but the new strip promises to be even more riotous as it depicts Opus and friends under the influence of hallucinogenic fungi.

Ever wonder what kind of snacks comic book characters like to eat? Here are some that I came up with:

COLOSSUS -- Big Red chewing gum

THE JOKER -- Snickers

JOHN CARTER -- Mars Bar

HUMAN TORCH -- Hot Tamales

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY -- Milky Way

THE BADGER -- Nuts

T-T-T-That's all, folks! Remember to send all comments, review items, and canned tuna to Don Chin, c/o THE TELEGRAPH WIRE. So long!

THE MOST UNEXPECTED SURPRISE OF 1984



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# MISTER X

PREMIERE • ISSUE

BY JAIME AND GILBERT HERNANDEZ  
THIRTY-TWO GLOSSY FULL COLOUR PAGES

JUNE 1984



# PLEASE DON'T FEED THE TOYS

by ANN EAGAN

**TOY:** n. 1. orig. A) amorous behavior; flirtation. B) pastime; sport. 2. a thing of little value or importance; trifle. 3. a little ornament; bauble; trinket. 4. any article to play with, esp. a plaything for children. 5. any small thing, person, or animal; specif. a dog of a small breed. 6. [Scot.] formerly, a woman's headdress of linen or wool, with flaps that hang over the shoulders. -- adj. 1. like a toy or plaything in size, use, etc.; specif. designating a breed of dog of a small kind [a toy terrier]. 2. made as a toy; esp. being a miniature imitation [a toy stove]. -- vi. 1. to play or trifle (with a thing, idea, etc.). 2. to engage in flirtation; dallily.

The toys I am about to discuss are unique because they fulfill so many of the diverse definitions listed here, and because of the ways they surpass all of the aforementioned definitions.

Take this robot sitting here with me. It's called the Valkyrie. I can read its name from here: that part's in English. The Valkyrie is still in its cage, its box, but I can see it through the cellophane window. It's a robot with long, sexy legs, broad shoulders, and a green face topped with antennae. If I were to take the Valkyrie out of the box and set it out in front of me, I would feel a distinct presence in the room. And then, if I was at all hip to what was happening, I would grab the legs of the robot and put them up against its back. And the arms would swivel at the shoulders to fold back in between the legs. But first you'd have to crack the back flat in half. (If this sounds gory, don't worry. Comics & Comix fully guarantees there will be no bloodshed, or your money back!) Anyway, you turn it over and close the feet and pull out the wings and...Voila! You have a first-class, highly maneuverable, high speed jet plane which--not to mention--is armed to the teeth! I'm not even gonna try to tell you what else it can do.

Walk into any Comics & Comix store and you'll see a glass case or two filled with Japanese "toys". There are warrior figures that stand a foot and a half high, which then "break down," "convert," "transform," "make into," hell, become five lions. Or five motorcycles, or seven robots, or an army of tanks and other vehicles. You'll see "toys" which are representations of characters from Japanese movies and animated films--like Ultraman, Godzilla, Astro Boy, or Dumbine or Dougram, or Gundam. You'll see tiny "toy" trucks and cars which become robots. You will even see model kits which are made so that, even after they are built, they can change into other forms.

Breaking them down to the relevant ones, I count six definitions to use as our criteria, as follows:

1. flirtation or amorous behavior; pastime
2. trifle -- of little value or importance



DALTANIUS

Photo (C) Clay Geerdes

3. ornament

4. anything to play with, especially for children  
5. any small thing (dog)  
6. miniature imitation

Can amorous or flirtatious behavior be attributed to the toys? No, of course not, because they are not alive. Can they be considered pastimes? Sure, whatever that is. Are they trifles? Of little value or importance? Whoa, Nelly! Slow down right there. If you want to know whether these toys are of any importance, just come by to a Comics & Comix toy counter any Saturday afternoon--you'll see how important they are! Parents and kids alike stand in rapt attention while a diligent employee demonstrates the miracle. Trifles? Of little value? Ask any toy collector if his toys are of little value. Go ahead, ask. Well, probably get a good laugh out of him--and that's if he's being polite. He knows there's a market out there for high quality, imported toys, especially after they've gone out of production.

Well, do they serve as ornaments? Sure, yeah. They look classy on a bookshelf or a desk. A great addition to anyone's decor. Very effective as paperweights (they're heavy). Impress your friends, influence people, and if you send us just ten dollars ...what? Oh, excuse me, I just lose control sometimes. Where was I? Ah yes. Anything to play with, especially for children? Well, yes and no. Yes, you can "play" with them. "For children"? Sure: children from age 6 to 97--and younger-than-six-year-olds who reach the counter. Does that answer your question?

Any small thing? Well...uh...any small thing. Hey, some of the toys are about an inch big all around, but others are two feet high and three feet wide. How can I class them together as "any small thing"?



Photo (c) Clay Beedles

TETSUJIN 28

But miniature imitation? Now you've got something. Something I can sink my toys into. Miniature imitation of what? The structure of a family? The chain of command in a fighter pilot unit? The emotions of an adolescent just emerging from puberty? Or is it: shovel, pick, hammer, truck, jet plane, toy soldier, tank, gun; jeep—a Ferrari even? Mystical warriors of Samurai bearing becoming, when needed, the lions to guard the gate? Miniature imitations of heroes and heroines, non-human heroes and heroines, who are just human enough to make me want to be one.

This is where the Japanese toys jump beyond the dictionary. In fact, it's the first aspect missing from the definition: the ability of any good "toy" to spark the *imagination* of its audience. To awaken some primeval sense of adventure in us—or some futuristic one. To strike some chord deep in our hearts and minds, to tell us "All things are possible!" and "Through me, you can enjoy a sense of power!"

The second aspect of our toys missing from the definition is, of course, *fun*. Just plain, pure and simple, fun. Now, I'm not sure what fun is, and I'm certainly not going to look it up. You know, too much analysis can ruin anything!

-- Ann Eagan

## THE THRONE IS RECAPTURED! THE USURPER IS DEAD! THE GODS ARE DESTROYED!

HEROIC YOUNG TUNDRA AT LAST  
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All in issue #20  
**BY JACK KATZ**

Published by  
Bud Plant, Inc.





Before embarking on my monthly crusade for the elimination of the quadruple exclamation point in comic book writing, allow me to respond to a criticism which High Empress Schutz has relayed to me from a number of sources.

The problem, according to Schutz, is that people believe that I as a reviewer am not entitled to review anything without having read it in its entirety. I disagree. However contrary to the ethics of reviewing this may be, it is my feeling that if I can not finish a mere comic book, I should not recommend it, no matter what glowing surprises may await me in the final pages.

Is this unfair to the publisher? I don't really think so. I knew after reading three pages of ATLANTIS that I would not be able to read the book, just as you can assume after eating an appetizer at a restaurant and having to be rushed to the emergency room that the entree to follow will not be overly appetizing. Just to check my hunch, though, I went back and finished the last twelve pages of DALGODA; they were no more inspiring than the others.

Fortunately, H.E. Schutz has provided me this time with either (a) material that I enjoyed or (b) wretched material that was short enough for me to finish. Tally-ho.

#### ERIE #141 and WALT DISNEY'S COMICS AND STORIES #510

I have chosen to review these two titles together in order to compare their respective levels of maturity.

First, we have what is apparently the lead story in the all-new EERIE magazine. Page one informs us that "Her name is Robert Kanigher's PYTHIA of the Land Beyond the Mist!"—a name with which I as a parent would not be apt to curse my child. But then again, Robert Kanigher's PYTHIA of the Land Beyond the Mist probably deserves her unique name, because she's a pretty unique gal: she turns into a snake and slithers around—that is, when she is not sensuously undulating through the trees of the jungle, lustily throwing herself upon any males that she sees. Indeed, in the words of Dan Ackroyd, Robert Kanigher's PYTHIA of the Land Beyond the Mist is literally seething with vital hormonal secretions.

In short, the new "adult" EERIE seems to be targeted at the same mentality as the old one.

In contrast, we have COMICS AND STORIES #510. I am not much of an expert on duck comics, as my first duck book was the first Barks reprint set, but the lead Donald story here appears to be by Barks; regardless, it's an entertaining romp which is unimaginably more entertaining and mature than "Robert Kanigher's etc. etc." I don't want to start delving into the psyche behind Barks' work or comparing it to *The Communist Manifesto*, but I do want all of you to take a closer look at this title. With its frequent Barks reprints and numerous other enjoyable features, it is a pleasant break from the monotony of superheroes and women who turn into snakes.

#### SGT. ROCK #393

DC Comics, like many of the alternative companies, has taken to sending out friendly letters along with its review comics in order, one assumes, to butter up the reviewers. I thought that I would print the one which I received with this comic, and respond to it.

Dear Friend,

You know, one of the most underrated comics DC publishes is SGT. ROCK. Issue after issue, writer Robert Kanigher tells stories of real people trapped in a world of war they never asked for. Give a read to this story from SGT. ROCK #393 and see if perhaps it's something you might want to pay more attention to from now on. Whatever your opinion, all I ask is that you share it with your readers.

Cordially,  
Bonnie Miller

Dear Bonnie,

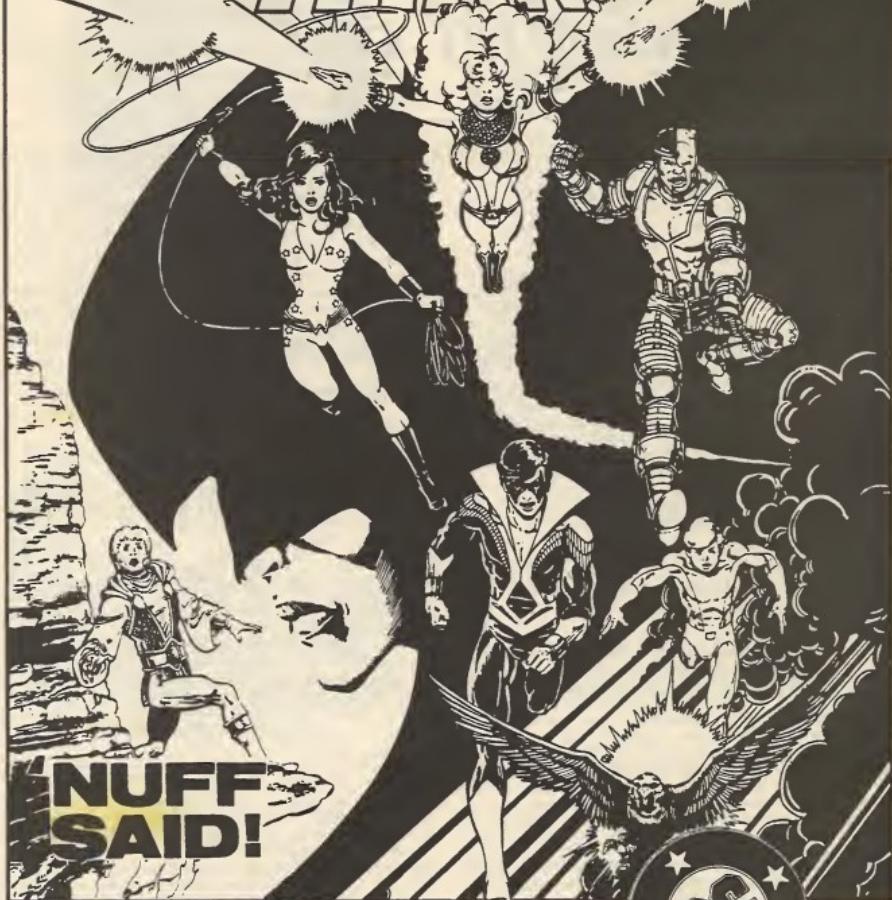
Thank you very much for your review copy of SGT. ROCK.

You know, while I can find nothing particularly offensive about this issue, I still cannot recommend it to my readers, as I feel that it falls into that large middle ground between good and bad, that is, mediocrity. The story is readable, but not exciting. The art is understandable, but not at all inspired. After having traded in my X-MEN for a FRONTLINE COMBAT collection, I have to say that I've been spoiled as far as war stories are concerned, and SGT. ROCK just doesn't make the grade.

Sincerely,  
Matthew Denn

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A RONIN tribute or rip-off?

#### TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

What I sincerely hope is that this is one of those pieces of satire so mature, so sophisticated, that I am simply missing the humor. Because what this book looks like to me is a rip-off of RONIN.

Frank Miller's work is extremely fertile ground for satire, but the creators of this book, Eastman and Laird, are apparently under the impression that the mere sight of turtles slashing people to pieces is enough to send the reader into hysterics. If you are a Miller fan this book will anger you, while if you are not, it will merely baffle you. In either case, I don't think that you'll like it.

#### MYTH ADVENTURES #1

Here, for a change, is a humor comic which is actually funny. Phil Foglio, with his clever panel constructions and unerring sense of caricature, has delivered the best humor comic since CEREBUS.

MYTH ADVENTURES is based upon a book by Robert Asprin, but the humor for me lies in Foglio's



From EERIE #141:  
more Playboy poses

manipulation of the story through characters' expressions and reactions to one another. It makes no attempt to duplicate the subtlety of CEREBUS, but instead carries out a magnificent exercise in slapstick--something which is surprisingly difficult to do in comics, as artists such as Dave Sim and Harvey Kurtzman can no doubt attest.

Probably the biggest compliment I can pay MYTH ADVENTURES is that, in gaining my enthusiastic endorsement, it conquered both my prejudice against science fiction and fantasy--and the extremely bad dinner I ate while reading the book! If you like laughing, buy this comic.



Skeeve and tutor:  
from MYTH ADVENTURES #1

AN ANNOUNCEMENT: I am sorry to have to say that this will be the last appearance, at least for some time, of "The Lion's Den". I am currently suffering through a case of funnybook burn-out, and thus, in order to maintain an atmosphere of fairness, I have decided to take an extended leave of absence. In my stead you will find movie reviewer Bob Schreck, who provides comments on the movie industry which make me look like Ms. Manners. If you start giving Diana a hard time, though, I am going to make a return engagement to review every comic on the stands featuring elves, wizards, or any combination thereof. Don't say you weren't warned.

-- Matthew Denn

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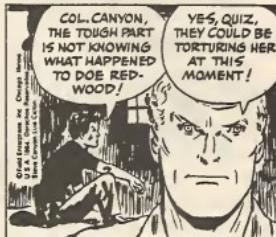
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Animation is a team effort, but what the team achieves reflects the imagination, vision, and creative energy of the director. The cartoons directed by Bob Clampett for Warner Brothers in the 1930s and '40s are as funny, vital, and spontaneous today as they were when they first left Termite Terrace. None of the characters would have been the same without Bob's wit and humor to flesh them out. Bugs Bunny and Porky Pig were extensions of the young Clampett, the kid who loved magic and puns, who got into animation when it was a young business and there were few restrictions. After the introduction of sound on film in 1927-28, the cartoon was used mainly to plug songs; Clampett was one of the major forces destined to move the medium beyond this commercial level. By the early forties, say 1942, when Clampett introduced Tweety and Sylvester in *A Tale of Two Kitties*, the animated cartoon was a tightly constructed art form, one destined to outlast most of the live action films produced on the lot during the same period. *Two Kitties* is one of my favorites. It shows Bob at his best. The cartoon is a parody of the comedy team Abbott and Costello who were at the height of their popularity during World War II. Clampett turns them into two hungry cats, Abbott and Catstello, both of whom are out to make their lunch out of a skinny little bird named Tweety. They fail, of course, and Tweety goes on to stardom, forever chased by one of the cats, who is renamed Sylvester in the subsequent cartoons.

I met Bob Clampett at an early San Diego Convention. That meeting was very important to me. The first comic character I ever drew was Bugs Bunny and as a kid I was always inspired by Porky and Tweety and Daffy Duck, always drawing them for friends. At that time, Bob and his wife, Sody, had started to go to conventions and college campuses where they would present a slide show, talk about the history of animation, and show a few of Bob's early cartoons. I introduced myself and Bob was warm and friendly, treated me like someone he had known for years. We talked about the cartoons and I later set up a show for him at the University of California in Berkeley. I promoted it as Animation Day and Bob came up with Sody, Milt Gray, and Willie

Ito. The evening was successful and it led to other animators appearing on campus later.

Bob worked on the Porky Pig cartoons at Warner's in 1937. One of his earliest was *Porky's Badtime Story*. In 1941 he did stories like *We, the Animals Squeak* and *Wabbit Twouble*. *Horton Hatches the Egg* was done in 1942. Bob's series for TV, *Beany and Cecil*, came along in the fifties to rescue us from the dreariness of McCarthyism and the Cold War.

Bob Clampett died yesterday, May 2, 1984. On the road until the last, he died in Detroit where he had gone to promote the home video release of his *Beany and Cecil* series. Well, the man may be gone to his reward, but his cartoons ensure a kind of immortality granted to very few. Right now, while I sit here at the typewriter, thinking about a lost friend, the lights are going down in some theater, the *Merrie Melodies* and *Looney Tunes* logo is lighting up the screen, and an audience is about to go on a lightning-fast trip through a corner of Bob Clampett's mind. That's my idea of a good time.

-- CLAY GEERDES  
May 3, 1984

\*\*\*\*\*  
Clay Geerdees' COMIX WAVE is a training ground for upcoming artists: a good place to get exposure and to show others some art before it gets wider circulation. To contribute, you join CW (\$6/year or \$11/two years); membership fee includes the CW newsletter. For a sample newsletter and brochure, send \$1 to Clay, P.O. Box 7081, Berkeley, CA, 94707.  
\*\*\*\*\*



BOB CLAMPETT with Bugs

Photo (C) Clay Geerdees



Dear Diana, John, or whoever else may be responsible,  
Thanks for putting me on your mailing list. THE  
TELEGRAPH WIRE is a lot of fun—reminds me of the  
days when fans were into having a good time with  
their hobby. I'm glad there are still people like  
you out there.

Keep it coming!

Roger Slifer  
New York, NY

P.S. Did you ever wonder who taught Brad Strong  
those techniques in the Orient? If you or any of  
the "several women" in your organization would like  
the full rundown, send a self-addressed, stamped  
envelope.

Hear that, gals? Let's go! Hubba hubba, snort,  
woof woof!

Dear Diana,  
I'll take the rap for this one. Your coverage  
of two DC projects, THE MEDUSA CHAIN and "Death  
Waits 1000 Years", was brimming with error.

Apparently my memos were unclear, so here we go again. THE MEDUSA CHAIN is [Ernie] Colon's baby from start to finish. Editor, author, artist, letterer, colorist. My work merely consisted of helping him with the editorial page and in promotion of the album. "Death Waits 1000 Years" was authored by Robert Kanigher. Keith Giffen, the artist, enjoys working on Kanigher scripts. He'd been asking for another for several months when editor Murray Boltinoff heard his plea and assigned him the work.

As for my work, besides the promotion of the album, I've accepted the position of Managing Editor of the new comics line at Harris Publications. Three books for now: CREEPY, EERIE, and VAMPIRELLA. Color comics. Baxter paper. Just spoke with Rich Corben who has agreed to do a cover for me. More on this later.

Another thought on the reprint controversy:  
I'll trust the judgement of the distributors. It's  
their money to spend as they damn well see fit.  
Period.

Yours,

Robin Snyder  
Jersey City, NJ

*Sorry about the mistakes, Robin. We try, but we're not perfect—yet! Regarding the reprint controversy: distributors order their books based on advance orders from retailers. So it's at the retail level that the buck ultimately stops—or doesn't.*

Dear Diana:

Just got done reading your editorial (and everything else) in TW #14. I too wish it were all somebody's idea of a bad April Fool's joke, but I'm afraid it just ain't so. It's real and it hurts. We've been fortunate enough to have had many nice things said and written about our suspension lately. For that, we're all grateful. Apparently, most people who were exposed to our publications thought we were doing it right. Unfortunately, that wasn't enough people. The one good thing that may come out of this is that comic buyers may be forced to realize that if they don't support change, they have no cause to bitch about how bad comics have gotten. Old buying habits die hard. People have to make a real effort to only purchase that which they feel is of real quality, not just 'cause you bought it last month and the 10, 20, 300 months before that. Gotta keep that collection complete, y'know. I know. I used to. Recently I went through my own collection to cull out what I didn't care about anymore (which I now do on a regular basis). I'm still amazed at the crap I've kept bagged, boxed, and in order all these years. It's a tremendously liberating experience to pull some of those issues or whole series out and turn 'em into dough, however little. Geez, that's one less box of stuff I've never re-read that I don't have to bust my ass hauling next time I move. (I've moved 8 times in the last 8 years. That's what living in a college town does to you.)

I find myself enjoying my comic reading all that much more now that there are a number of regularly published quality comics. It's a shorter but sweeter experience than plowing through a dozen and a half superhero rags per week like I used to. There's still an urge for more quantity, but that can be met, if enough brave, creative ventures are actively encouraged and financially supported. I take honest-to-god pride in the fact that I have vehemently supported CEREBUS for all these years, by turning others on to it, buying multiple copies, talking it up in fan publications; not to mention the ads I got paid nicely to do for two years. They were one of my greatest delights to produce in my pre-Capital Comics days. Apparently, it all paid off, to some degree, by all reports. Still, it kills me that it only sells as many as it does! I don't think it's expecting too much to think a book of its one-of-a-kind calibre would appeal to more than 18,000 people in the U.S., Canada, and overseas, which are the areas it now sells to. Frustrating...

Enclosed is our latest press release. I mean,

releases. Sorry the one is a bit vague, but these negotiations with other publishers thing is a sensitive issue and we're still in the formative stages. We'll be releasing more details as soon as things are confirmed. I can assure you though that it is very likely you will see NEXUS, THE BADGER, and WHISPER in print again within the next few months. From whom is anybody's guess right now. The artistic teams will most likely be the same, but I'm not sure my studio (Abraxas) will still be involved in the editorial and design end or who will be coloring. I hope we all do work together again, but it's most important that the creators can start telling their tales again, whatever it takes.

On an up note, we did get the posters out and they all look sharp. People should check their local shops for them. Strangely enough, this was one case where we had more orders than copies to sell. Ah well...

Enough, as they say. (Who?) Them. (Oh.) Watch it! This could turn into a Joshua Quagmire interview if I'm not careful. Then it'll never see print!

Seriously though, I want to thank you for all your kind words of support expressed in the WIRE, in letters, and in calls. I'm sure things were able to continue just a little bit longer because of it. Yer a classy lady, that's fer shure.

Take care and keep up the good work. The WIRE's become one of my favorite zines. If I have any good news, I'll write or call. Hi to everyone at C&C.

Yours,

Richard Bruning  
Editor/Art Director  
Capital Publications Inc.  
Madison, WI

*Wow, Richard, I'm feeling kind of overwhelmed by your letter. Thanks very much for your generous words and for the drawing you sent along. We're all keeping our fingers crossed for you guys and looking forward to the reappearance of Capital's titles on the market. On a different note: I too urge people to divest themselves of the mediocre books merely gathering dust in their collection. I've been doing this on a regular basis myself and it's sent me to New York a couple of times in the last year alone! And now for more on the subject of Capital's suspension...*

Dear Diana:

I too am disappointed and saddened by Capital's suspension of publication. But I don't believe all of their problems can be blamed on the market. Although in a better market their problems might not have been so hard to handle, the fact is that they should have been aware of the market they were in and taken realistic steps to survive in it.

First of all, the package. While it is a very nice package, I think perhaps less expensive paper or less expensive color would have lowered their costs substantially and not really lessened the appeal of the comics. Aardvark-Vanaheim charges about the same for black and white on newsprint that Capital charged for color on Baxter paper, so whose profit margin is higher? You could say that they were trying to expand the market by offering more for the readers' money, but I think the art and story are of utmost importance to the readers, not fancy color processes. While these may be nice to see, do they really add that much more to the appeal to justify their higher costs? I won't say that going to color at all was a bad move for them, but



Nexus (C) Capital Pubs.  
Artwork (C) Richard Bruning

TO DIANA —

Diana!  
Richard

I don't think they were wise to do it in such a grandiose manner. I think their costs escalated too much and too rapidly for a gradual build up in readership to offset. And a gradual build up is all they really had a right to expect.

My second point is about their coming out with WHISPER when they did. Since it wasn't that long a time between the premiere of WHISPER and their announcement of suspension of operation, it seems to me they must have known they were having problems before WHISPER premiered. And it's generally not good business to introduce a new, untried product when you don't have a good financial base to support it. Any new comic takes time to build up readership, especially without a big name behind it, like Marvel or DC, and no previous word of mouth about it. (This is a good reason for sending out advance photocopies, as First does.) The joke that goes 'We lose money on each one, but we make it up in volume,' is just that: a joke. If they weren't making enough money on NEXUS and THE BADGER, which are far better than WHISPER in my opinion, they shouldn't have invested the time or expense in WHISPER. Instead, the smart move would have been to cut costs on NEXUS and THE BADGER and allow them time to build up a good, secure financial footing before coming out with any new comics. I don't think coming out with various assorted comic-related paraphernalia was the answer.

I hope they do not sell to Marvel or DC, as I have heard they might. I don't have much confidence in the future of either NEXUS or THE BADGER in their hands.

Yours truly,

Joanne Streit  
Albany, CA

*You make some good points, Joanne, but I think that Capital's business practices were coloured by a refreshing sense of idealism. Rather than cater to (and thereby survive in) a junk-food market, they were interested in serving up a gourmet treat to educate the market as to the finer things in life. Perhaps you're right: too much too soon. But who can blame them for trying?*

Hi Lady Di!

Thanks for publishing "Sooper Heroes" in the latest issue of THE TELEGRAPH WIRE—it was a very funny issue, and the Joshua Quag-(or is that Quack?)—mire interview was uproarious.

Tell Matt Denn that he is really an entertaining writer--I like his reviews. (Anyone who likes Pat Broderick is OK with me.)

I don't read "S.F. Sidelines", but then, I don't read sci-fi books either. I like Clay Geerdes' column--he is one of the few people pumping blood into the veins of Newave publishing, and I have always respected him for that. By the way, is the new issue of HUMPO in yet?

Received a great postcard from Mike Baron, swearing revenge for that joke I wrote about him--whatta guy...he really made my day! The TW must really get around the U.S. to have him read that in Wisconsin!

'Til next time,

Don Chin  
Eureka, CA

Thanks, Don. Glad to have you and "Sooper Heroes" aboard. It's nice to know there's someone else out there who enjoys Matt Denn's writing as much as I do. For a couple of dissenting votes on that score, read on...

Dear Diana:

I welcome intelligent, even provocative and unconventional criticism of our new color comic DALGODA (or of our other projects for that matter), but what critical purpose is served by running reviews by a self-admitted philistine who admits to not even reading the books he reviews?

I refer, of course, to Matt Denn and his review of DALGODA #1. I know people are reading less and less these days, but is it really asking too much of a comic book critic to at least *read* the comic he's reviewing? (I notice of the seven comics he reviewed in that column, Denn did not read two of them; he must have the easiest job of anyone on THE TELEGRAPH WIRE's staff.) And in addition to his not reading DALGODA in its entirety, there is the amusing matter of his fallacious logic, his feeble critical insights, and the stupidity of the review generally.

About his fallacious logic. Denn prefaces his "review" by stating his intention to use *my*—yes, believe it or not, *my*—aesthetic criteria to review DALGODA rather than use his own because--now, get this—"Gary Groth, its publisher, is renowned for his potshots at most of the other books in the comics industry." Now, I should like to point out that a critic's criteria and commitment to excellence are the result of a complex, ongoing process of evaluation and re-evaluation, a codification and understanding of those values in art he feels most unreservedly strongly about; and that it is intellectually dishonest to shift his criteria around according to the personality, the temperament, or even the writing of a book's publisher. Not to mention impossible for someone like Denn, who, aside from not having recognizable standards of his own, is quite incapable of comprehending mine. Finally, there is a certain delicious paradoxical Dennish idiocy in the fact that if he were actually to have used *my* standards instead of his own, he would have written a glowing review of DALGODA since obviously I like the book.

It's also worth pointing out that his primary criticism of Jan Strnad's writing is that the book contains "lots of big words," though he doesn't tell

us which words he finds offensively big, how long a word has to be in order to qualify as "big," or why "big words" are in and of themselves objectionable.

An enlightened chain of stores like Comics & Comix should know that publishing *mature* criticism may accelerate the maturation of the comics form; there's nothing to prevent illiterates like Denn from reading comics, but editorial responsibility could prevent them from writing about comics.

Cordially,

Gary Groth  
Publisher  
Fantagraphics Books, Inc.  
Stamford, CT

Pretty strong words, Gary, and though I agree that a critic should read in its entirety the material he's reviewing, you'll find Matt's defense of his position in his current column—a defense that was written, I should point out, before the receipt of your letter. I do think, however, that this isolated incident does not warrant your all-encompassing castigation of Matt Denn and his critical abilities..but you may be relieved to hear that Matt will no longer be contributing reviews to the WIRE—and "editorial responsibility" had nothing to do with it. Matt is wise enough to know when he's burning out on comics in general and has decided to drop his column until such time as he can drum up a bit more enthusiasm for our industry and its product.

Diana,

Thanks for the recent TELEGRAPH WIRE. Enjoyable as always.

A minor caveat: Your stand (theory) in editorial (lack of variety in comics/concentration on super-jocks) is at odds with what you produce (practice). Though unfamiliar with titles covered by your reviewer, most appear to be the same old super drivel.

So what would I have done? Mmmnnn. Perhaps focus on different titles/subjects. Review books such as JONAH HEX, GUNFIGHTERS, BETTY AND VERONICA, TWISTED, PORKY PIC, etc. Critical still, of course.

Or--perhaps you're right in handling matters as you did. My approach might scare away your readers.

Yours,

Robin Snyder  
Jersey City, NJ

What would I do without your letters, Robin? (Two in this issue alone!) I think you'll find the current review column little more eclectic than usual, though we have always tried to give the independents their fair share of the spotlight. Two problems: (1) with superheroes making up the dominant proportion of the market, it stands to reason that superhero titles will be reviewed more often, and (2) we prefer to review material sent to us for express purpose, and superheroes dominate in that area too. (By the way, I'm not too worried about scaring away my readers—not with a zine that we give out for free!)

\*\*\*\*\*  
That's it for this time, folks. Thanks to all of the above for writing. And to those of you who haven't yet sent us a letter--hey, I'm talkin' to you, bub!--get it together and mail in a piece of your mind to: THE TELEGRAPH WIRE, 2461 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley, CA, 94704. Remember to initial it with loving care!



Cerebus

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# NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND

In the past ten years European comics aesthetics have slowly (but surely) pervaded U.S. comic book art. From Herge to Moebius, every American fan knows a handful of French artists' names.

Some of these names can be found in the pages of VIPER, a French comic magazine recently imported to the Bay Area. Druillet, Voss, Sire, and many other contributors "let go" with no editorial intrusion but for quality. The styles and contents further a distinct European preoccupation with form and design.

VIPER, born in 1981 from the miscegenation of underground comix, HIGH TIMES, and a couple of fans raised on TINTIN, PILOTE, and SPIROU, presents in comic book form the France of the outlaw, the doper, the sub-genius. Every three months, 64 pages of comics from the avant garde of French comic art can now be yours. Not only will you be part of the world-wide VIPER conspiracy, but to answer bitter criticism as to the redeeming value of this magazine, you may (on top of high quality entertainment) better yourself by learning French with comix.

So don't hesitate, send us your money, your gold, your wife, and help us (the founding members of VIPER) realize our dreams to become Masters of the World before the year 2000!

VIPER can be found at Last Gasp, P.O. Box 212, Berkeley, CA, 94701, or at Comics & Comix in Berkeley. VIPER #1 and #2 (limited supply).....\$2.50 VIPER #3, 4, 6, 7, and 8.....\$3.50 VIPER #5 (Christmas '82).....\$3.95 VIPER #10.....\$4.75 VIPER #9 (Christmas '83).....\$4.50

-- Erick Gilbert



(c) Kelley

Art by FOUR-FISTED TALES creator Kelley

FOUR-FISTED TALES creator (Bob) Kelley writes to say that issue #3 is currently in production. Along with Kelley's own work, FFT #3 will feature work by local artist David Miller (who is responsible, by the way, for many of the WIRE's column logos) as well as a two-page piece by Spain Rodriguez.

In the meantime, Kelley is looking for people to take older work of his and render it in their style. Payment to be negotiated. All interested parties should put together some photocopied samples of their work and contact Kelley at 1005 Sansome St. #230, San Francisco, CA, 94111, or call him at (415) 391-2272.

\*\*\*\*\*

GAY COMIX #5 is due out even as you read this. Under the new editorship of San Francisco cartoonist Robert Triptow, the latest issue features stories by GAY COMIX alumni Roberta Gregory, Howard Cruse, Rick Campbell, Oemian, Vaughn Frick, Theo Bogart, Jennifer Camper, Jerry Mills, and Triptow himself. Newcomers to the title this issue include Tim Barela, Michael Goldberg, Michele Lloyd, playwright Richard Valley, and T.O. Sylvester who will be contributing the cover -- the first GAY cover, incidentally, done by a woman. According to editor Triptow, GAY COMIX will begin to emphasize humor and satire much more than it has in the past.

Triptow has also contributed the lead feature, the hilarious "Nowhere Chick", to the newly-reprinted edition of BIZARRE SEX #4. Long unavailable, both BIZARRE SEX #4 and #6 are now back in print, thanks to Denis Kitchen.

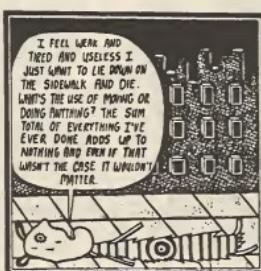
\*\*\*\*\*

Work is now in progress on a full-color, Baxter edition of the FABULOUS FURRY FREAK BROTHERS #8. It will include the color strips from RIP OFF #11 and #12, plus new material. An all new Fat Freddy's Cat story, "The War of the Cockroaches", will be featured. Cover price will be \$2.00 and Rip Off "hopes for a ship date sometime this summer."

\*\*\*\*\*

After more than a year, the latest issue of RAW magazine has finally hit the stands. Subtitled "the graphic magazine that overestimates the taste of the American public," RAW #6 delivers the consistently outstanding quality we've come to expect from the title. Buy this magazine--you owe yourself the favor!

-- Oi Screaming



From RAW #6: Mark Beyer's "Nothing"

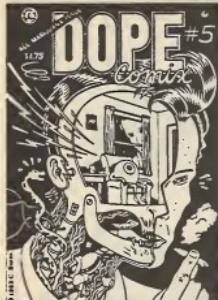
(c) Mark Beyer



"Cabbage Patch Clone" in GAY COMIX #5

(c) Howard Cruse

# UNDERGROUNDS ARE NOT DEAD!



Under the impression that "underground" comix are dead? Don't you believe it! Two new titles are out from Kitchen Sink Press in December and a blockbuster color mini-series in spring! DOPE COMIX No.5...Terrific cover by Charles (Raw) Burns high-lites this all-marijuana issue. Plus: Steve Stiles, an "Omaha" story by Reed Waller, Chris Browne (son of Dik), Monte Wolverton (son of Basil), Sharon Rudahl, Gary (Phoebe) Whitney & more! \$1.75.

GAY COMIX No.4...powerful AIDS story by Howard Cruse. Vaughn Frick cover, Lee Marrs, Kurt Erichsen, Joe Sinardi & Roberto Gregory. 44 pgs. \$2. Harold Hedd starring in HITLER'S COCAINE...coming in spring Baxter paper/full color adventure story from ultra-talented Rand Holmes. Watch future ads for 1st issue's release date.



## HAROLD HEDD



© 1983 R. Holmes

## Color Spirit Comic Book!

The Spirit is now a full-color Baxter paper comic! For the first time ever the classic Will Eisner stories are reprinted in chronological order. And what classic! The Spirit No.2 is on sale in mid-December. It has better color than ever! The originals (if you find them) would cost \$12.00.



## Will Eisner's QUARTERLY 1

What a package! The first issue of Will Eisner's Quarterly starts off with a brand new 33-page story, "Life Force," a sequel to the universally acclaimed graphic novel, *A Contract With God*. Eisner proves again with this powerful story that he is at the height of his powers. Also featured is a long interview with Neal Adams—illustrated by many never-before-published examples of Adams' art. Finally—a 16 page color section which reprints a very rare Spirit comic strip plus a Bob Powell Mr. Mystic—both from 1940! Add a new Eisner cover painting...all for just \$2.95.



## HARVEY KURTZMAN & WILL ELDER GOODMAN BEAVER

The long-awaited Goodman Beaver collection, originally announced for November publication, ran into some legal snags and will not be available before Christmas. However, it is at press and will be out soon after Xmas.

The Goodman Beaver book features four complete classic stories by Harvey Kurtzman and Will Elder plus a lengthy introduction by Will Elder. Does not include the background information, commentary by Elder & Kurtzman, and a synopsis of the ill-fated "Goodman Goes Playboy" story which cannot be included in this volume.

A deluxe hardcover edition is available, featuring a color dustjacket, seven binding and a special plate drawn for this edition by both Kurtzman and Elder. Limited to 1250 copies. \$25.

Quality paperback edition is also available at \$9.95.

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# PRESSBUTTON #1

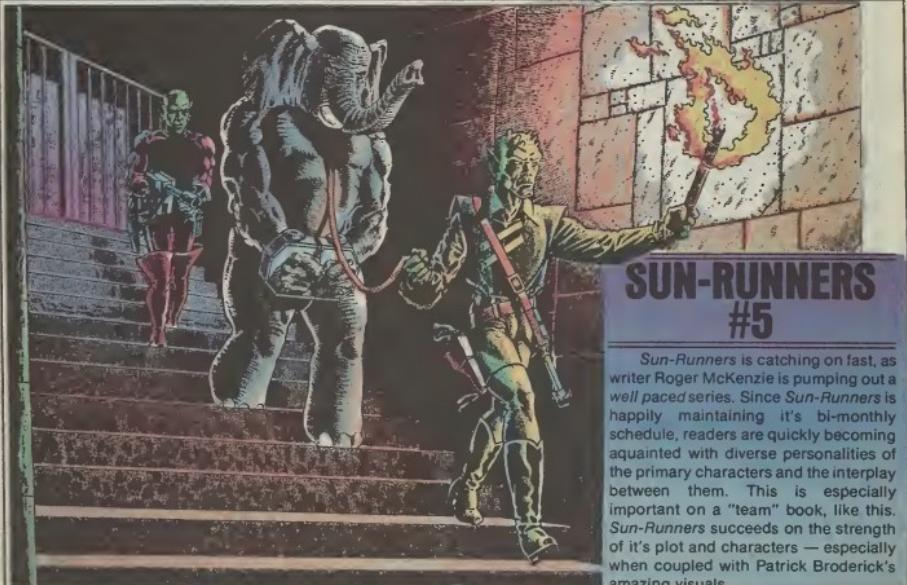
If you're after futuristic action, immaculately rendered with a touch of black humor (like Judge Dredd or American Flagg), we've got a new title on tap, that's right up your alley — Pressbutton.

Pressbutton originally appeared in black and white in the acclaimed British graphic story magazine *Warrior*. We are pleased to be presenting these "sharp" adventures to the United States audience. Pressbutton, in color for the first time, will be published on a regular bi-monthly schedule.

Written by Pedro Henry and illustrated by star artist Steve Dillon, we start off their adventures with a bang! If that weren't enough, we are treated to a funny, sexy 4 page back up by Brian Bolland. Here is adventure crisp and powerful as a laser beam. Pressbutton is here.

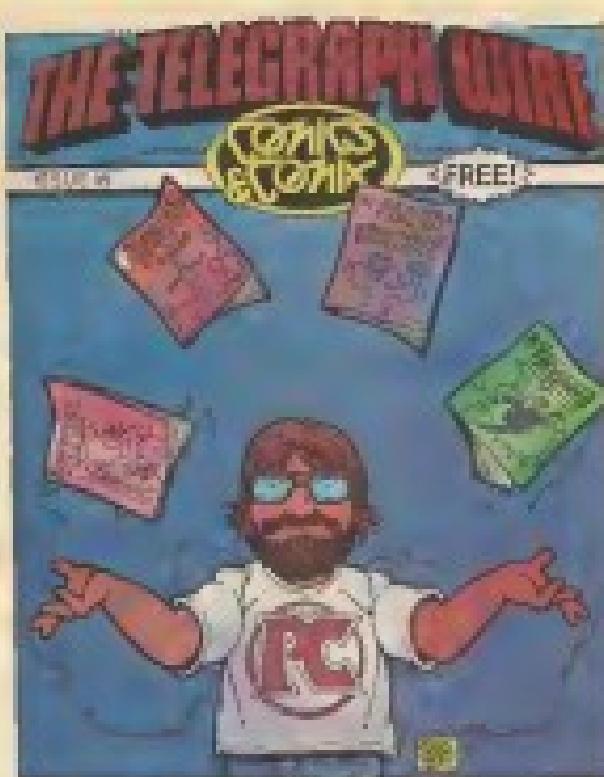


Pressbutton #1 — 32 pages, quality white stock, B. Bolland cover. July/August ..... \$1.50



# SUN-RUNNERS #5

Sun-Runners is catching on fast, as writer Roger McKenzie is pumping out a well paced series. Since *Sun-Runners* is happily maintaining its bi-monthly schedule, readers are quickly becoming acquainted with diverse personalities of the primary characters and the interplay between them. This is especially important on a "team" book, like this. *Sun-Runners* succeeds on the strength of its plot and characters — especially when coupled with Patrick Broderick's amazing visuals.



## The Telegraph Wire # 15 (1984)

Scanned from cover to cover from the original by jodyanimator.

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